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An Intertextual Analysis of Vietnam War Films and US Presidential Speeches

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Abstract

Elite articulations of state policy and popular cultural artefacts both construct common sense about world politics, yet the connections between 'low' cultural texts, such as war films, and 'high' policy discourses are often ignored, obscured and denied within IR. In this thesis I conduct an intertextual analysis of gendered representations of the Vietnam War and US identity in Vietnam War films and in US presidential speeches. I compare the representations articulated in three popular films—*The Deer Hunter*, *Rambo: First Blood, Part II* and *Forrest Gump*—with those articulated by Presidents Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush (Senior) and Clinton in inaugural and State of the Union addresses (1975–1996), in order to investigate whether and how transformations in these discourses occurred during this period. I have selected these texts not because they are *a priori* expected to be good examples of intertextuality but, rather, because they are popular films and because the speeches are delivered frequently and regularly over time. I examine these discourses over a twenty-year period in order to examine intertextuality as an ongoing process rather than as an isolated phenomenon or as a feature of one particular 'anomalous' era. The original contributions of this project are thus to be found in the research design as well as in the empirical analysis.

The speeches and films display a remarkable degree of homogeneity in their representations. In all three films, and in the speeches of all five presidents, the Vietnam veteran is valorised. However, the gendered nature of these representations changes over time. The binaries underpinning the narrative logic of *The Deer Hunter* are also iterated in the expressions of trauma and renewal found in Ford and Carter's speeches; *Rambo II*'s account of how and why the US 'lost' in Vietnam resonates with Reagan's articulations; and the models of masculinity and femininity found in *Forrest Gump* find their counterparts in the gendered representations Bush and Clinton deploy to articulate problems in contemporary domestic US society. Divergences between presidents' rhetoric and cinematic representations are also identified, such as the contrast between Rambo's hypermasculinity as based on bodily strength and President Reagan's enthusiastic promotion of technology. I conclude by arguing that the act of 'reading together' these seemingly discrete discourses provides us with a richer and more nuanced understanding of how the construction of identity, foreign policy and world politics occurs than does the analysis of either policy articulations or popular culture in isolation.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: Christina Rowley DATE: 30 November 2010

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List of Abbreviations

AMPAS	Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences
AP	Associated Press
APSA	American Political Science Association
ARVN	Army of the Republic of [South] Vietnam
BISA	British International Studies Association
BJPIR	*British Journal of Politics and International Relations*
DPA	Discursive Practices Approach
ECPR	European Consortium for Political Research
FNG	Fucking new guy
IAAF	International Association of Athletics Federations
ICBM	Inter-continental ballistic missile
IFJP	*International Feminist Journal of Politics*
IMDb	Internet Movie Database
ISA	International Studies Association
ISP	*International Studies Perspectives*
ISQ	*International Studies Quarterly*
KKK	Ku Klux Klan
LBJ	Lyndon Baines Johnson
LZ	(Helicopter) Landing zone
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NLF	National Liberation Front
NLF/VC	National Liberation Front/Viet Cong
NPS	*New Political Science*
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
NVA/NLF	North Vietnamese Army/National Liberation Front
POV	Point of view
POW	Prisoner of war
POW/MIA	Prisoner of war/missing in action
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
RPG	Rocket-propelled grenade
RV	Recreational vehicle
SDS	Students for a Democratic Society
TNG	*Star Trek: The Next Generation*
VA	(US) Veterans Administration
VC	Viet Cong
WAUDAG	University of Washington Discourse Analysis Group

Chapter 1: Introduction

The reason why we must be concerned with the theory as well as the history of the subject is that all discussions of international politics – of the past and the present as well as the future, of what it is as well as of what it should be – in any case proceed upon theoretical assumptions, which we should acknowledge and investigate rather than ignore or leave unchallenged.

(Bull 1995 [1972]: 183)

No thoughtful person would wish to argue that the movies are the best source of information and insights into the complexities of international relations.

(Gregg 1998: 3)

Understanding media techniques is as central to political thought as the classical texts.

(William Connolly, 2007)

Introduction

In the summer of 1992, when I was 13, my brother returned from a holiday in France. Flopping into a chair in our living room, he tossed me a rather worn, tatty-looking paperback and, explaining that he had read it simply because it was the only book in the hotel room other than the Gideon Bible, reluctantly conceded that it was 'okay' but suggested it might be more my 'style'. Its dull gold cover was embossed with a small gold silhouette of a Huey helicopter and the author's name and the title in big letters: Danielle Steel, *Message From Nam* (1990). I read it and, from this one book, my interest was piqued: I started to devour anything on the Vietnam War I could get my hands on: journalists' memoirs, soldiers' autobiographies, oral history collections, novels, old issues of *National Geographic*, protest songs, films and, once I became a student, scholarly articles, monographs and edited collections. I wrote my undergraduate dissertation on the impact of the 1968 Tet Offensive on US policy in Vietnam, and opted to do an MA in International Studies so I could continue to learn about the conflict. So, my academic trajectory and my research interests have, for the last eighteen years, been profoundly shaped by this chance encounter with a fictional text that does not make any claim to be authoritative, 'highbrow' literature or objective analysis.[1]

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[1] A friend of mine describes Steel's works of romantic fiction as 'charity shop staples'.

What strikes me as important – the reason I mention this seemingly trivial anecdote – is that if someone can become interested in studying politics from reading popular cultural texts, then we must surely include popular cultural texts in our study of politics.[2] Popular cultural artefacts are never 'merely entertainment'. We get information from them, they shape our ways of thinking, make us feel certain ways about events, characters, stories, whether or not we accept these representations as 'true' or 'false', 'authentic' or 'distorted'. Quite simply, the practice of engaging with texts creates 'truths' for people – academics and policy-makers included.[3]

What *Message From Nam* also highlighted for me, although I did not become aware of this until much later, as I learnt about feminist theory, is the importance of how gender functions in narratives – and not only in love stories (although it is more overtly accepted as relevant in this context, perhaps because romance is a 'woman's genre' and 'gender' is often mistakenly assumed to be synonymous with 'women' [Carver 1996]). As Susan Jeffords argues, 'a study of the structural relations between warfare and gender reveals them to be intimately connected, so much so that one does not survive without the other' (1989: xv). Gender functions as a representational and narrative logic – that is, gendered discourses are deployed in particular ways – in all Vietnam War representations, be they 'fact' or 'fiction', 'elite' or 'popular', 'scholarly' or 'entertainment', romance- or combat-based narratives (or both). For example, Jacqueline Lawson's (1991) examination of Vietnam veterans' oral histories and autobiographies reveals the centrality of gendered language and imagery in veterans' war experiences. Looking back now, I am aware of the extent to which my own (gendered) understandings of the conflict, and its impact on US identity, have been shaped by popular culture as well as by scholarly treatments.

In this chapter, I first discuss the motivations behind this thesis, before presenting the research objectives, and the central and subsidiary research questions. I then

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[2] Popular culture is defined here in the broadest possible sense, as including (but by no means limited to) print and broadcast news, films, TV, the internet, literature, art, dance, sport, fashion, foodways, and tourism. Overwhelmingly, however, analysis of popular culture in IR focuses on novels, films, and traditional and electronic news media.

[3] The implications of the theoretical claims made in this introduction, and the epistemological, ontological and methodological commitments that underpin them, are discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

discuss the ways in which popular culture research is both incorporated and marginalised within the discipline of International Relations (IR)[4] and provide a brief overview of the academic literature which informs the research design and to which the thesis makes a contribution. Throughout this discussion of relevant literature, I unpack the principles underlying the research design, after which I delineate the methods and criteria used to select the texts (films and speeches) that are examined in the empirical analysis. Finally, I provide an outline of the thesis structure as a whole, and the content of the subsequent chapters.

Context and Rationale

This project was motivated by a frustration with the paucity of popular culture analysis within IR, as well as with the marginalisation of this work. The lack of popular cultural research from orthodox perspectives to/in IR is not particularly surprising. IR has traditionally concerned itself with the 'big' questions of war and peace, the 'high' politics of national security and the national interest, the 'hard' politics of geostrategic alliances and the global balance of power. The numerous, varied critiques of positivist IR from postpositivist perspectives (within which I include feminist, poststructural, Frankfurt School, constructivist and postcolonial theorists, among others) have illuminated the ways in which the discipline marginalises and excludes popular culture, and academic analysis thereof.[5] Nevertheless, the focus of much constructivist research in IR has remained invested in the analysis of themes and processes already accepted (determined) by mainstream IR scholars as central and appropriate to the discipline.[6]

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[4] In this thesis, I use International Relations (with capital letters) to signify the academic discipline and international relations to mean the practices of world politics (academic practices included).

[5] Although words such as postpositivism and poststructuralism are commonly hyphenated, I do not do so here, in order to highlight the theoretical debt owed by 'postie' concepts to the theories they are sometimes claimed to supplant or reject. In contrast, I occasionally disarticulate words such as author-ity and re-present in order to remind the reader of the intimate links between power and the construction of object-knowledges and subject-positions.

[6] I use the term 'mainstream' to mean the dominant theoretical and methodological approaches in IR, namely, neo-realism, neo-liberalism and rationalist variants of constructivism. These approaches dominate the discipline in the US to a greater extent than in the UK. I focus my critique on these US-based perspectives because this thesis is primarily

The Vietnam War has had, and continues to have, a deep and enduring impact on US foreign policy and on US identity and society (Brands 1996; Simons 1998; Melanson 2005). Christopher Hemmer argues that 'if there is one historical analogy that has overtaken Munich in prominence [in US foreign policy rhetoric] it is Vietnam' (2000: 1). However, within the sub-field of foreign policy analysis, accounts of post-Vietnam US foreign policy have tended to ignore the cultural impacts and legacies of the conflict, focusing more on the formal institutional processes and the impacts on policy elites and outcomes.[7] Yet popular culture comprises the primary sites, practices and frames through which people make sense of the world.

Of these sites and practices, film is central to US understandings of the Vietnam War. More than thirty major US cinematic treatments of various aspects of the conflict have been produced over the last four decades, with many hundreds more touching tangentially on the conflict, through representations of veterans and through other overt and implicit references.[8] Moreover, in terms of audiences' consumption, visual artefacts are arguably more emotionally visceral, less overtly (recognised as) politicised (by both audiences and IR scholars) and, therefore, potentially more powerful, sites of meaning-production, than are their linguistic counterparts.[9] The visual dimensions of popular cultural forms of communication thus require analytical concepts and approaches not found in IR. Mainstream IR

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interested in US foreign policy, US films, US presidential speeches and representations of US identity.

[7] See, for example, Art and Brown (1993), Brands (1996), Davies (1995), Dumbrell (1997), Dumbrell with Barrett (1997), Foerster and Wright (1990), Grinter and Dunn (1987), Haass (1997), Hastedt (2009), Hurst (2005), Ikenberry (1989, 2005), Jervis (2005), Lieber (1997), McCormick (1998, 2010), Melanson (2005), Mitchell (2005), Nau (2002), Neack *et al.* (1995), Palmer and Morgan (2006), Smith *et al.* (2008), Wittkopf and Jones (1999), Wittkopf and McCormick (1999, 2008). Some foreign policy analysis texts will occasionally include a chapter focusing on public opinion and/or news media – see, e.g., Cameron (2005), Chittick (2006), McCormick (2010), Neack (2003), Robinson (2008a, 2008b), Salisbury (1984), Strobel (1999) – but otherwise tend not to include discussions of popular culture as relevant to the conceptual frameworks for understanding foreign policy decision-making. Rare exceptions include Medved (2004) and the chapter on 'Identities and US Foreign Policy' (Rowley and Weldes 2008) in the recently-published textbook, *US Foreign Policy* (Cox and Stokes 2008), although it should be stressed that popular culture was not explicitly part of the brief given to the authors in the latter case.

[8] See Devine (1999) and Hunter (2003) for fairly comprehensive – if already somewhat out-of-date – lists of more than 400 and 300 films, respectively. Encompassing a broader geographical and generic focus, Malo and Williams (1994) offer a list of 600 films.

[9] This is not to suggest a radical dichotomy between visual and written/linguistic texts. Most texts are built on a complex interplay of visual and linguistic dimensions.

> fails to understand how popular visual expressions participate in these framings [of world politics and foreign policy] because it does not make the link between the linguistic and the visual. It fails to link the linguistic to the visual because while the linguistic is understood as the medium through which 'real' politics is communicated, the visual is often dismissed as merely popular. (Weber 2008: 138)

Although there is a vast amount of scholarship within arts and humanities disciplines that focuses on the cultural (linguistic and visual) dimensions of Vietnam representation and US identity,[10] it is not enough to point to the existence of separate disciplines for cultural analysis, or to argue that IR can leave this work to scholars of literature or film because, if we do not integrate analysis of the everyday – in this case, popular cultural texts and practices – into the study of world politics, we risk

> misunderstanding contemporary subjectivity, spatiality, and temporality. By failing to grasp who we are, where we are, and when we are, IR cannot possibly comprehend what we say and do, much less what we hear, feel, and see. (Weber 2008: 138)

We must interrogate popular texts and practices *as scholars of politics and IR* if we are to comprehend the complexity of (the politics of) the world around us, and (the identities that underpin) the policies pursued by states and other actors within it (Enloe 1996).

Acknowledging popular culture's importance also has ramifications for the ways in which we study 'conventional' IR texts.[11] As noted above, whether ostensibly

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[10] See, among many others, Adair (1989), Anderegg (1991), Auster and Quart (1988), Bates (1996), Beidler (1982, 1991), Chattarji (2001), Dittmar and Michaud (1990), Eberwein (2005), Franklin (2000) Gillman and Smith (1990), Hellmann (1986, 1997), Herzog (1992, 2008), Hixson (2000), Jason (1991, 2000), Jeffords (1985, 1986, 1987-8, 1988a, 1988b, 1989, 1990, 1991, 2000, 2005), Kinney (2000), Lanning (1994), Louvre and Walsh (1988), Melling (1990), Neilson (1998), Ringnalda (1994), Rowe and Berg (1991), Searle (1988), Slocum (2006), Sturken (1997), Suid (2002), Taylor (2003), Walsh and Aulich (1989), Wood (2003), and special issues of *Wide Angle* (1985), *Cultural Critique* (1986) and *Genre* (1988), as well as articles in *Journal of American Culture* (1981).

[11] A commitment to seeing the world as a text does not mean that only texts can be analysed through this perspective: 'To regard the world of "international relations" as a text... is to inquire into the style of its scripting, to reveal the way it has been mediated' (Shapiro 1989: 11-12, 13). However, in this project, I have chosen to focus on texts as they are conventionally understood.

'fictional' or 'factual', no representation is ever an unmediated 'reflection' of the 'real world'. Thus, the concepts and approaches deployed in popular cultural analysis can (and, I argue, should) be deployed in the analysis of elite, official texts and documents produced by, for and about 'the state'.[12] Understanding the constructions of identity, and their power-effects, in these texts is essential to our analysis of international political processes.

Of the vast quantities of official publications and utterances, one form of communication stands out as central to the construction of national identity and of foreign policy: the presidential address. National addresses are 'a significant form of public presidential behavior' (Ragsdale 1984: 972), since the president's spoken words are his 'primary means of communication' with the US public (Medhurst 2003b: 220) and 'the power of the presidency is the power to persuade' (Neustadt 1990: 11). Speeches now form '"the core of the modern presidency"' (Geldermann quoted in Teten 2003: 334). They are the 'most prominent and potentially influential weapon in the President's political arsenal' (Schaefer 1997: 97). Presidential speeches fulfil a variety of practical political functions, such as announcing resignations and pardons, declaring war, or outlining new policy proposals (Ragsdale 1984: 971) but they also carry symbolic weight. An analysis of scholars' beliefs about presidential roles found that 'the role of symbolic spokesman for the nation rivalled foreign-policy planner and domestic-policy initiator in historians' estimations of what mattered most' (Murray and Blessing in Emrich *et al.* 2001: 528).

As the nation's 'interpreter-in-chief' (Stuckey 1991), no individual is better positioned than the president to speak for and to the US public, and to define US identity. Through speeches, presidents 'develop a symbolic identification between themselves and the nation', creating the 'imagery of national spirit and oneness' (Ragsdale 1987: 705). This symbolic power is most evident in those speeches that fulfil ceremonial

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[12] Indeed, the concept of 'popular' versus 'elite' constructions is something of a red herring here, since films are also produced by elites, who are not always as far removed from policy elites as one might assume. See Robb (2004), Valantin (2005) and Mayer (2007), among others, on the interconnections between Hollywood and Washington, D.C. Conversely, elected officials and decision-makers rely on popular support, frequently attempting to persuade the public of the validity of their policy assessments and prescriptions, and of their worthiness to hold office—and often doing so through the medium of television.

functions, i.e., in inaugural and State of the Union addresses. In these speeches, presidents 'define and redefine the national ethos and the nation's values... and, in so doing, weave the fabric of a shared national heritage and identity' (Campbell and Jamieson 1990: 73). Speeches can thus be interrogated for 'who we are, where we are, and when we are' in the same ways as can popular cultural texts.

Having ascertained that the same textual analytical approaches – those which ask questions about the construction of identity and about the implications of these constructions – can be applied to both popular cultural and policy discourses, this commonality allows us to ask questions about the similarities and differences between different discursive arenas. When popular cultural analysis is conjoined with analysis of official articulations of foreign policy, we can discover how these discourses are *intertextually* constituted – about the ways in and extent to which similar representations are identifiable across ostensibly different, discrete discourses. Intertextual analysis proceeds from a rejection of the assumption that the objective in interrogating diverse discourses is to search for causal relationships (effected either 'from' popular culture 'to' 'foreign policy', or vice versa). Rather, it is to explore the representational congruencies these discursive representations share (as well as the ways in which discourses diverge/are in tension).

Research Question and Objectives

In this thesis, I explore the gendered intertextuality of representations of the Vietnam War and US identity in popular cultural texts and US foreign policy rhetoric, over a period spanning approximately twenty years. Specifically, I examine three popular films about the Vietnam War – *The Deer Hunter* (1978), *Rambo: First Blood, Part II* (1985) and *Forrest Gump* (1994) – in conjunction with US presidents' inaugural and State of the Union addresses between May 1975 and December 1996. This study is situated within IR. It contributes to the substantial body of postpositivist IR scholarship, and to critical IR engagements with popular culture, more specifically. It also makes a contribution to the sub-fields of US foreign policy and (within Politics and Communication Studies) presidential rhetoric,[13] as well as to the

[13] I discuss the academic literature on presidential rhetoric in more detail in chapter 3.

'inter-disciplines' of gender studies and cultural studies. Rather than looking for particularly good examples of intertextuality, I have selected the texts for their hegemonic status within their own discursive contexts. The original contribution of this research is thus to be found in the construction of the data set as well as in the empirical analysis of these texts.

This project has five objectives:

- to interrogate the gendered representational logics at work in the construction of US identity and the Vietnam War in presidential speeches;
- to interrogate the gendered representational logics at work in the construction of US identity and the Vietnam War in popular films;
- to analyse the gendered continuities and transformations in these discourses over time;
- to investigate the intertextuality of gendered representations in hegemonic texts;
- to demonstrate the importance of studying popular culture for/in International Relations, both independently and in tandem with documents that are conventionally accepted as relevant to the study of world politics.

The central research question is:

- How does gender function to constitute intertextual representations of US identity and the Vietnam War in popular films and US presidential speeches?

The subsidiary research questions are:

1. How are US identity and the Vietnam War (constructed as) gendered in US presidential speeches?
2. How are US identity and the Vietnam War (constructed as) gendered in popular films?
3. In what ways are these representations similarly gendered? In what ways do they differ?
4. How are these gendered discourses iterated over time?
5. Do transformations in/of these gendered discourses in the films and speeches occur in similar ways and at similar points in time?

By answering these questions, I demonstrate that reading the gendered articulations found in films and in presidential speeches from different eras not only teases out the fluidity of gendered logics as these shift subtly over time, but also helps us to understand the ways in which these seemingly independently-constructed representations are, in fact, mutually reinforcing and thus more powerful and resilient to critique. Deploying films to analyse presidential rhetoric permits a richer and more nuanced picture of textual representations to emerge.

In order to set the scholarly scene for the thesis, I next outline some features of IR's engagement with popular culture, first through an overview of the ways in which engagement with popular culture is limited in mainstream IR, then through a critical reading of an exemplar of the mainstream approach to the incorporation of popular culture (Gregg 1998). I undertake this critique to demonstrate that the discipline is configured in such a way as to exclude and marginalise popular cultural forms of (and approaches to) knowledge about global political practices, and to expose how this configuration also functions to occlude (mainstream) academic IR's own role as a site of knowledge-production and therefore as a site and practice of global politics. Thereafter, I review a few key examples of postpositivist popular cultural research in IR that intersect with the themes and objectives of this project.[14]

IR and Popular Culture

Searching for literature that examines the relationships between popular culture and world politics can be a rewarding or fruitless task, depending on where one looks. In cultural studies and film studies, gender studies and postcolonial studies, there is a wealth of research discussing the political dimensions of popular cultural texts and practices, their production, representations and consumption. In IR, however, popular cultural analysis is so far removed from the mainstream that its absence rarely warrants comment, let alone an explanation or any critical reflection. When 'culture' is invoked or discussed, it is most frequently deployed in the sense of supra-/sub-/national culture (e.g., Huntington 1998; Rubinstein 2005; Moghadam

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[14] The one exception is *Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War* (1989), by Susan Jeffords (who was, at the time of its publication, in an English Department), because of its relevance to this project.

and Elveren 2008), strategic culture (e.g., Poore 2003; Meyer 2005) and/or institutional culture (e.g., Paris 2003), rather than *popular* culture (Weldes 1999a: 117-8).

There are some limited ways in which popular culture does make an appearance in mainstream IR publications. A survey of recent issues of *International Studies Quarterly* (ISQ), the flagship journal of the (US) International Studies Association (ISA), reveals a small number of articles about the relationship between news media and political regimes and practices (Williams 2003; Baum 2004; Rioux and Van Belle 2006; Slantchev 2006; Whitten-Woodring 2009). One article has discussed the different uses of photography to explore representations of HIV and AIDS in Africa (Bleiker and Kay 2007).[15] Neither *International Security* nor *International Organization* – two other prominent and respected IR journals – has published any articles concerned with popular culture in recent years. Occasionally, articles note in passing a popular cultural connection – for example, in terms of intellectual property rights (e.g., Sell and Prakash 2004) – or journals such as *Review of International Political Economy* will include articles about media distribution networks (e.g., Scott 2004) or the cultural aspects of globalisation (e.g., Milanovich 2005).

Non-US periodicals are more pluralist in terms of both topics covered and analytical approaches deployed. The official journal of the British International Studies Association (BISA), *Review of International Studies*, recently published a special issue on 'Cultures and Politics of Global Communication' (2008; particularly relevant articles include Weber [2008], Lisle [2008] and Dunn [2008]) and devoted a substantial section of another volume to 'Art, politics, purpose' (see Danchev and Lisle 2009). It has also occasionally published articles, that have explored, for example, the 'CNN Effect' (Robinson 1999), 'car culture' (Paterson 2000), images of war (Campbell 2003), 'monsters' and 'ghosts' post-9/11 (Devetak 2005) and ironic comedy and graffiti (Brassett 2009). Other journals, such as the (UK) Political Studies Association's (PSA) *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* (BJPIR), *Millennium* (based at the London School of Economics), *Security Dialogue* (based at

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[15] See also Roussel (2007) in *International Political Sociology*, the ISA's most recently-launched journal, now in its third volume (by no means the most widely-read of the ISA's five serial publications).

the Peace Research Institute, Oslo, in Norway) , *International Feminist Journal of Politics* (IFJP) and *Geopolitics* regularly publish critical popular cultural research, as has a more US-oriented journal, *New Political Science* (NPS). However, these latter journals are not typically recognised by (US-based) mainstream IR scholars as 'core' to the discipline.[16]

A growing body of IR scholarship discusses popular culture's (principally film's) utility for teaching world politics (see, e.g., Gregg 1998; Lipschutz 2001; Lisle 2003; Weber 2001a, 2001b, 2005b, 2009; Engert and Spencer 2009; Simpson and Kaussler 2009). Particularly visible in this regard is the journal *International Studies Perspectives* (ISP; formerly *International Studies Notes*), another of the ISA's official journals, which 'supplements' ISQ by publishing shorter articles, forums and symposia, and which regularly devotes space to pedagogical issues.[17] Other journals that have published articles exploring the pedagogical value of popular culture/film in politics and IR include the American Political Science Association's (APSA) *PS: Political Science and Politics*, similar in remit to ISP (e.g., Lang and Lang 1998; Lindley 2001; Beavers 2002), and the European Consortium for Political Research's (ECPR) *European Political Science* (e.g., Allen 2002; Giglio 2002; Ostrom 2002; Sadow 2002).

I do not wish to suggest that the scholars cited in the previous four paragraphs believe that the most important or only way in which popular culture matters in IR is in terms of its pedagogical value. Nor am I arguing that all of these authors approach

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[16] In BJPIR, see, for example, Street (2004), Bale (2005), Street, Hague and Sauvigny (2008), Ingle (2007), Carver (2007), Rowley (2007), and Coleman, Kuik and van Zoonen (2009). In *Millennium*, see, *inter alia*, Weldes (1999a, 2001), Bleiker (2001), Brown (2001), Lacy (2001), Neumann (2001), Shapiro (2001), Weber (2002), Hall (2008) and Carpenter (2009), as well as the (2003) special issue on the impact of information technology on IR, and the (2006) special issue on the sublime in world politics. In *Security Dialogue*, see van Ham (2003), Shapiro (2005, 2007) and Lacy (2008), as well as the (2007) special issue on 'Securitization, Militarization, and Visual Culture in the Worlds of post-9/11'. Articles in IFJP include Cohn (1999), Lisle (1999), Hansen (2001), Winkler (2002) and Weber (2005a). From *Geopolitics*, see the (2005) special issue on 'Reel Geopolitics', as well as Dodds (2003) and Raento (2006). In NPS, see, e.g., Boggs (2006), Boggs and Pollard (2006, 2008), Davison (2006) and Van Veeren (2009). Additionally, *Millennium*, IFJP and NPS also publish film reviews. It should be noted, however, that this list of references includes multiple citations to a few 'usual suspects' who publish prolifically on popular culture and IR. Note, also, the preponderance of special issues, which could plausibly be interpreted as a form (or the result) of disciplinary marginalisation.

[17] See articles by Weber (2001a), Kuzma and Haney (2001), Dougherty (2002), Waalkes (2003), Webber (2005), Ruane and James (2008), Simpson and Kaussler (2009), Juneau and Sucharov (2010) and the 2002 ISP Forum, 'At the Movies' (Boyer *et al.* 2002).

the relationships between popular culture and world politics in the same ways. The sources cited above span a variety of mainstream and critical perspectives, and many of these authors have also conducted research into other aspects of the interconnections between popular culture and IR. The point I wish to make is a disciplinary/institutional one: that the pedagogical dimension of the popular culture/politics nexus is the only aspect which is viewed as respectable (if still not entirely mainstream) in IR, and it is the only way in which 'mainstream' IR scholars will engage with popular culture. That this type of academic writing is often viewed as more akin to 'commentary' than 'research', and that it is typically found in journals alongside other pedagogical issues such as 'active learning', 'case studies' and 'simulations', only serves to underscore the ways in which many academics believe that the popular cultural analysis is supplementary to the 'real' work of world politics research (in much the same way that the journals in which these pieces appear are considered to 'supplement' the 'core' disciplinary periodicals).

In order to demonstrate the disciplining effects of this move, I examine one source as an exemplar of this standpoint: Robert Gregg's (1998) *International Relations on Film*. Gregg's text (above all, in the introduction and conclusion) highlights the disciplining discursive practices that are (required to be) deployed in order to maintain the conventional view of the discipline's core features, approaches and theoretical commitments.

Film as a 'Window on the World'?

Gregg claims, specifically with regard to teaching IR, that films 'can make an important contribution to our understanding of international relations' (1998: 1) insofar as they are one of the major sources of information about the world in which we live and the forces shaping our lives (254). However, this initial claim about films' importance is almost immediately modified and limited by his assertion that '[f]ilm can never be a *primary* source in this quest for knowledge about IR; it can, however be a valuable *adjunct*' (1, emphasis added). Films are not the best source of information about world politics (3), nor are they 'a substitute for other means of learning about IR' (3). Indeed, 'common sense will confirm' that films 'leave

something to be desired as a syllabus for the study of international relations' (15). However, 'if approached with an open mind, a healthy scepticism' and the 'proverbial grain of salt' (260, 15), '[a]t their best, films may serve as valuable history lessons' (5).

These quotes highlight the pedagogical focus about which Gregg is unabashedly explicit. Films can be 'a useful and occasionally powerful tool for learning' (1998: 15) because they provide us with concrete examples of abstract notions (4). Films 'dramatize', 'personify' and 'personalize' complex ideas so that we are able to identify with actors and contextualise events (3, 4, 5). Films make academic IR accessible because a picture can tell a thousand words (4, 3). Films also build 'bridges' to bygone eras and events, in this way reminding us that 'issues on the global agenda today were also present in times past' (5, 253-4). They demonstrate 'that the ways in which those issues are perceived and addressed vary over time' (254), reflecting 'both continuity and change in international relations' (253). Finally 'and perhaps most importantly, feature films can contribute to a better understanding of international relations by serving as catalysts for debate and further enquiry' (6). Films' 'most valuable contribution', therefore, is 'to generate and sustain [the] interest' of the student/scholar of world politics (15).

Gregg is clear about why films are problematic sources of information for the IR scholar, and why they can/should/will never be more than an 'adjunct' to the study of world politics: above all, the problem is that, in the process of dramatising events, films condense history such that the different versions and interpretations of events that they offer always 'reflect the knowledge, the perspective, and the vision of those involved in their making' (1998: 7). Films are useful to the extent that they present an accurate, 'true' image of the real world (as judged by the rational, objective scholar-expert). However, because of their very nature, films or, rather, film-makers 'frequently distort the [historical] record' (7): they simplify, edit and editorialise, 'omitting here, embellishing there, manipulating our sympathies all the while' (7).

Evidence for these omissions and distortions can be found not only in the biased and propagandist nature of many films but also in the uneven cinematic treatment of IR:

some issues and perspectives appear inherently more interesting to film-makers than others, and are therefore over-represented (Gregg 1998: 10).[18] Hence, transnational economic relations are rarely the focus of blockbusters. Indeed, Gregg argues that history itself 'suggests that war is the most dramatic and most enduring form that international relations takes' (19), which perhaps accounts for the preponderance of war movies in his canon of pedagogically useful films.[19] He finds realism to be the dominant IR perspective found in popular films but, interestingly, a 'normative' perspective also predominates over a scientific viewpoint (10, 12). In sum, as long as we remember to keep films in their place, and not let them become too important, we can have the best of both worlds, studying the stuff of IR 'as we enjoy the derring-do of spies, the heroism of soldiers in battle, and the agonizing of statesmen as they grapple with the latest foreign policy crisis' (23).

This last quote is interesting for several reasons: (a) the focus on 'high politics' events – wars and international crises – as opposed to the local, the everyday, and the mundane (cf. Cynthia Enloe's [1996] 'margins, silences and bottom rungs'); (b) the fact that it is men who act on the international stage, as spies, soldiers and statesmen, and in whose male and masculine image these roles continue to be (re)presented, even if they are occasionally carried out by women in the twenty-first century; and (c) the ways in which these (male and masculine) actors 'grapple' with foreign policy. Despite Gregg's many assertions to the contrary, his quote reveals that cinematic works bear a striking resemblance to mainstream academic IR's rarely-reflected-upon self-image. This is also evident in his claim that war is over-represented in films about world politics, which also applies to academic IR scholarship. Academic texts reflect the 'knowledge', 'perspective' and 'vision of those involved in their making' just as much as do popular texts.

Gregg's assumption that the worlds of film/popular culture and IR are radically distinct involves the construction of a series of binaries between, on the one hand, film/popular culture as emotional, subjective and personal, and, on the other,

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[18] Gregg's book is structured thematically around the concepts he wishes to explore, including chapters devoted to sovereignty, intervention, espionage, crisis decision-making and war. These concepts are thus reified and reinforced as central to the discipline of IR.

[19] See Fry (2007) for a comprehensive refutation of the claim that war, violence and aggression are the norm in human history.

scholarly IR as rational, objective and universal. For poststructuralists, however, these are arbitrary distinctions, since 'meaning is always imposed, not discovered' (Shapiro 1989: 11) and

> [a]lthough it tends to operate implicitly, the separation of the world into kinds of space is perhaps the most significant kind of practice for establishing the systems of intelligibility within which understandings of global politics are forged. (12)

Gregg's conceptual framework, like most 'traditional forms of political analysis[,] help[s] to naturalize reigning interpretations rather than registering their meaning- and value-constituting effects' (Shapiro 1989: 20-1). Specifically, Gregg reifies academic conceptualisations and subordinates popular cultural representations to these. In contrast, a poststructural approach problematises rather than problem-solves (Der Derian and Shapiro 1989a: xi) and addresses 'questions of how knowledge, truth, and meaning are constituted' (Gregory 1989: xiii).

The Intertextuality of Popular Culture and World Politics

In James Der Derian and Michael Shapiro's (1989b) edited volume, *International/ Intertextual Relations*, the dichotomies which undergird Gregg's and similar analyses are rejected in favour of examining world politics and foreign policy through 'an intertextual approach, in the sense of a critical inquiry into an area of thought where there is no final arbiter of truth' (Der Derian 1989a: 6). Rather than seeing/creating a distinction between a 'text' (i.e., fiction, film, cultural artefact) and the 'real' (i.e., fact, scientific study, policy document) or, for that matter, between the film-maker and the academic or the film-maker and the politician, this approach 'textualises' world politics. It acknowledges the centrality of narrative, metaphor, representation, in *all* the ways in which people understand the world, and makes visible (and interrogable) the political nature of the processes by which ostensibly discrete discourses come to share constructions of the world.

The contributors to this volume explore various aspects of IR theory (Elshtain 1989; Hurwitz 1989; Walker 1989) and US foreign and national security policy (Fortin 1989; Luke 1989), among other topics. One chapter is centrally concerned with the

intertextuality of IR and popular culture: Der Derian's (1989b) review of Cold War spy novels, in which he investigates 'how these two discourses—the fictive literature of international intrigue and the "factive" literature of national security and espionage—produce meaning and legitimate particular forms of power' (168).[20] Der Derian finds that spy novels share similarities with, and also diverge in significant ways from, official discourses of national intelligence. Early in the Cold War, 'the greatest gap between popular spy fiction and quasi-secret fact could be found in the area of technical intelligence gathering... what might be at work is a kind of literary lag' (176-7), whereas, in more recent novels, 'a bureaucratization as well as the technologization of surveillance espionage is taking place' (178). He notes that 'a literary lag also seems to be at work in other technological areas. Only in a cursory way has the [fictional] literature dealt with the growing contradiction between national sovereignty and its technological obsolescence', the illogicality of defending borders in the face of new technologies such as ICBMs, satellites and electronic communications (181). Although tracking the intertextuality of representations over time is not Der Derian's primary objective, he nevertheless demonstrates its importance.

In 'Going Cultural: *Star Trek*, State Action and Popular Culture,' Jutta Weldes (1999a) discusses the popular and highly successful 1960s television show, and one of its 'spin-off' series, *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (TNG). Her 'ideological analysis' of the *Star Trek* world and its organising concepts is revealing for 'the ways in which *Star Trek*... parallels and reproduces elements of the common sense of US foreign policy discourse' (133). Representations of 'self' in *Star Trek* – the Federation of United Planets and its military branch, Starfleet – resonate closely with US conceptions of self-identity (126-7):

> 'We' are constituted, for example, as benign and motivated by curiosity rather than as malevolent and motivated by aggression (versus Klingons or Romulans), as adventurous rather than stagnant... enterprising not complaisant... trustworthy not treacherous (versus the Romulans or TNG's Cardassians)... generous rather than greedy (versus TNG's Ferengi). (129)

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[20] Somewhat unusually, few of the 'fictional' works that Der Derian discusses are cited in the endnotes to his chapter, making it difficult to judge the precise time-span of the publication of the popular cultural texts about which he is writing.

Members of Starfleet are interpellated as multicultural liberal individualists, whose Prime Directive 'prohibits Starfleet personnel from interfering in the normal internal development of other societies' (124) and whose actions and intentions are always peaceful and defensive. These representations permit a reading of US identity and foreign policy in which the United States, too, is a liberal, non-interventionist and benevolent actor in world politics. However, in contrast to *Star Trek*'s ostensible multiculturalist ethos, its principle of non-intervention and its objective of benign exploration, Weldes identifies hierarchy, interventionism and militarism as pervading the discourses of both *Star Trek* and US foreign policy (127) and highlights the ways in which popular cultural texts are implicated in the construction of US identity and the legitimisation of foreign policy.

In *IR Theory: A Critical Introduction*, Cynthia Weber (2001b, 2005b, 2009) analyses IR theories' foundational 'myths' through popular cultural representations. Specifically, she discusses Kenneth Waltz's (1959 [1954], 1979) realism (through *Lord of the Flies*), Charles Kegley's (1993, 1995) neo-idealist view of international society (through *Independence Day*), the constructivist approach formulated by Alex Wendt (1992) (through *Wag The Dog*), Adam Jones' (1996) account of gender in IR (through *Fatal Attraction*), and Francis Fukuyama's (1989, 1992) 'end of history' thesis (through *The Truman Show*) (Weber 2001b). In each case, she enriches our understandings of the 'unsaid' that IR theories must deploy in order to function, by paying careful attention to how similar scenarios play out in cinematic narratives. Her readings illuminate, for instance, the ideological labour performed by the emotion of fear as the permissive cause of war in Waltz's theorising of international politics; the myth of the 'doer behind the deed' (Best and Kellner 1997: 69) that is scripted into Wendt's brand of constructivism; and that the 'international society' of which Kegley writes is, in fact, structured as a hierarchical system in which the US is positioned as the global hegemon.

Der Derian looks at similarities and differences between two discourses over time; Weldes shows us how US identity is constructed (and obscured) through popular culture; and Weber reveals the variety of ways in which popular culture and academic IR are intertextual. These authors use popular culture to interrogate the

discipline and practices of IR, as opposed to Gregg's strategy of using IR to critique popular cultural representations. What these texts demonstrate, albeit from different analytical perspectives and with different empirical foci, is the value of paying attention to popular culture because of what it *does* tell us about world politics, not because of what it 'can' tell us about world politics if we discard everything that doesn't fit with our pre-conceptions about what IR 'is/should be'. These authors thus raise the question of whether there are more commonalities to be found, and how these interconnections might be iterated – maintained and/or transformed – over time. However, the cultural texts analysed by Der Derian, Weldes and Weber appear to have been selected for the very reason that they are good examples of intertextuality and lend themselves well to such analysis.

While 'official representations of international politics and foreign policy depend upon the cultural resources of a society', as do popular cultural articulations (Weldes 1999a: 119, 133; 2003: 7), politicians also do not 'slavishly' reproduce popular cultural representations (Hansen 2006: 7). Likewise, Hollywood may re-present, but never merely duplicates, official narratives of world politics. The interesting empirical question, then, is, with a surfeit of latent cultural resources, with so many potential (re)articulations that could be activated in any given discursive context, which are deployed? One of this study's original contributions is the construction of the corpus of texts (the 'data set'). Rather than choose films and speeches because they are known to be especially similar in their representations, in this thesis, texts have been selected independently of any expected intertextuality. The aim of this study is to examine texts which have been identified as 'hegemonic' in their own discursive context, and to compare these texts, in order to establish whether the representations are similarly constructed (whether and how their representations of US identity and the Vietnam War are in tension or mutually supportive). In short, the aim is to identify whether the meanings that enjoy hegemony in one discursive regime are also hegemonic in another.

While popularity and hegemony are not synonymous, they share aspects in common. The texts analysed here are popular in the sense of being *produced* for mass consumption and in their *consumption* by broad segments of the US public. As to the

first of these, films are intended to be profitable and speeches are intended to resonate with the public at large. Substantiating the second claim are films' box-office receipts and speeches' audience ratings.[21] Hegemony is somewhat harder to prove or judge than popularity. However, films and speeches are created by elites who are recognized as having legitimacy and author-ity within their respective discursive arenas. The popularity of these texts is taken to be an indicator of the masses' (passive) 'consent' to the meanings with which they are presented, and thus, the hegemony of the discourses which those texts articulate.

Finally, although films are one 'type' of text, they vary widely in their narrative structures and visual representations, and their analysis may well require different concepts and approaches. Therefore, just as texts were chosen on the basis of their popularity rather than as particularly apt examples of intertextuality, the speeches and each film will first be analysed separately, before the intertextual connections between the texts/discourses are drawn out (chapter 7), to ensure that the fullest possible space is given to the tensions and divergences that might emerge.

The Gendered Intertextuality of Popular Culture and World Politics

Feminist scholars have examined the gendered dynamics of the intertextual connections between world politics/foreign policy and popular culture (see, e.g., Cooke and Woollacott 1993; Zalewski 1995; Cohn 1999; Lisle 1999; Hansen 2001; Weber 2002, 2006; Cohn and Enloe 2003; Smith 2004; Rowley 2007, 2010). Most relevant here are Charlotte Hooper's (2001) analysis of models of masculinity in academic IR and in *The Economist*; and Susan Jeffords' (1989) interrogation of representations of the Vietnam War, in which discussion she includes films and novels as well as veterans' oral histories and policy-makers' accounts, such as Richard Nixon's *No More Vietnams* (1986 [1985]).

As Hooper notes at the very beginning of her book,

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[21] As a point of comparison, at its peak, NBC's fictional presidential drama, *The West Wing* (1999-2006), achieved weekly audiences of around 17-18 million people (Philpott and Mutimer 2005: 337). Bill Clinton's 2000 State of the Union Address, which received the *lowest* audience ratings of any State of the Union address in recent years, was watched by 31.5 million people (*Electronic Media* quoted in Kolakowski and Neale 2006: 4).

> One of the achievements of feminist contributions to international relations has been to reveal the extent to which the whole field is gendered. The range of subjects studied, the boundaries of the discipline, its central concerns and motifs, the content of empirical research, the assumptions of theoretical models, and the corresponding lack of female practitioners both in academic and elite political and economic circles... The world of international relations appears to be truly a man's world. (2001: 1)

Feminists have both broadened the boundaries of, and transformed as a whole, the discipline of IR by asking 'where are the women?' (Enloe 1990), and, increasingly, through interrogating masculinities (see, *inter alia*, Ling [2000] and chapters in Zalewski and Parpart [1998] and in Parpart and Zalewski [2008]). Hooper is interested in the role played by academic IR in 'shaping, defining, [and] legitimating' constructions of masculinities, particularly in the context of challenges posed to the 'existing gender order' by processes of globalisation (2001: 4). Gendered identities are malleable, requiring constant iteration, with some elements remaining stable and some changing as the discursive context shifts. Using R. W. Connell's (1995) notion of hegemonic masculinity, Hooper explores discourses in *The Economist* between 1989 and 1996, because this publication is 'an important and influential site for the cross-fertilization of ideas between popular culture, practitioners, and academics in the field' with 'strong links both to changing masculine identities on the ground and to the construction of masculinities in the discipline of IR' (2001: 11, 14).

Hooper demonstrates that *The Economist* is 'saturated with the imagery of well-established constructions of hegemonic masculinity' (2001: 15) but also that '*rival models* of hegemonic masculinity are in competition with each other' (15, emphasis added) – in the language and in the images (including advertisements). In the reportage of technological developments, for example, scientific knowledge is positioned as 'carr[ying] the highest status as "truth"... and is constituted as "masculine" through the gendered dichotomies of modernity' (130) which pose mind/objective/order/masculine against body/subjective/chaos/feminine (Harding in Hooper 2001: 130). Hooper also shows how the periodical's 'house style' relies on 'the discursive conventions of representational realism... [in which] the text is presented as if it is a natural reflection of experienced reality, a transparent window on the world' (131). The effect of realism's discursive devices is 'to achieve narrative closure... a coherence that... is the voice of hegemonic masculinity —which rather

than drawing attention to itself appears as the voice of bourgeois-rational reason' (Hooper 2001: 132). Thus, linguistic and visual codes operating in *The Economist*

> embody several forms of hegemonic masculinity in a powerful, if incongruent synthesis; bold, brash, and aggressive, on the one hand, and measured, rational, and logical, on the other, with imperial overtones thrown in for good measure, suggesting superior brawn, brains, and class combined. (136)[22]

In the final chapter, in which she demonstrates the intertextuality of models of masculinity in *The Economist* and academic IR, Hooper identifies similarities between popular cultural representations and both positivist and postpositivist IR perspectives. Her analysis highlights the importance of remaining attentive to how gender and, more specifically, different models of masculinity, function to create and sustain the intertextuality of popular culture and IR.

Jeffords' *Remasculinisation of America: Gender and the Vietnam War* (1989) was for twenty years the only book-length feminist analysis of representations of the Vietnam War.[23] This is surprising, given that

> Although war might at first seem to be a man's world... the arena of warfare and the Vietnam War in particular are not just fields of battle but fields of gender, in which enemies are depicted as feminine, wives and mothers and girlfriends are justifications for fighting, and vocabularies are sexually motivated. (xi)

Defining masculinity as 'the set of images, values, interests, and activities held important to a successful achievement of male adulthood', Jeffords notes that '[w]hile the composition of the masculine can vary from time to time, it remains consistently opposed to the "feminine", those characteristics that must be discarded

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[22] In countering arguments that the style is 'so incredibly crude and clichéd that few self-respecting, educated Western male readers would "buy" it' (2001: 137), Hooper notes that irony functions to put 'emotional distance between the reader and the subject matter—emotional distance and control being a central feature of bourgeois-rational masculinity... irony saves the masculine message and at the same time positions the readers as part of the educated intelligent elite' (137).

[9] As this thesis was in the final stages of being prepared for submission, Brenda Boyle (2009) published her *Masculinity in Vietnam War Narratives: A Critical Study of Fiction, Films and Nonfiction Writings*. I was unable to integrate Boyle's arguments into the analysis presented here but I would like to thank Paul Higate for bringing this text to my attention.

in order to actualize masculinity' (xii). She also introduces the notion of '"the masculine point of view", which represents the disembodied voice of masculinity... the voice through which dominance is enacted in a narrative representation, though it may not be consistently spoken by any one character' (xiii).

Jeffords' text reveals the importance of gender to the construction of US identity in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, highlighting the emotional and ideological labour involved in the US project of remasculinisation in the post-Vietnam years. She discusses the 'narrative mechanisms that are employed in the project of remasculinization' (1989: xiii; see also chapter 1), the ways in which the feminine is eliminated from the masculine realm in order to effect this remasculinisation (chapter 3), and the recuperation of the American soldier/veteran, victim of the policies of the US government, who achieves a 'renewed status... in opposition to characters or institutions defined as feminine', finding that 'government figures are shown to be weak, indecisive, and vulnerable, in opposition to the now strong, determined, and decisive soldier/veteran' (xiv; see also chapters 4 and 5 in her text).[24]

Jeffords' interest lies in the variety of narrative mechanisms and topics at work in Vietnam War representations, and in how they function, rather than in how discursive constructions from different eras vary, or, conversely, how they may have remained resistant to change through different historical periods. In contrast, in tandem with the decision to analyse films and speeches chosen independently of their intertextual qualities, this thesis explores popular cultural and policy discourses over time, illuminating the maintenance and transformation of gendered articulations found in the speeches and films.

These texts can be interrogated for any number of different (and always overlapping) modes of subjectivity. I am interested in the ways in which gender is implicated in the functioning of intertextuality because gender is explicitly – and, at times, vehemently – denied as having any relevance to the study of foreign policy and world politics,

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[24] These themes are discussed in more detail in the empirical chapters in this thesis (specifically, in chapters 4, 5 and 6).

while being inherent to the functioning of these practices. The denial of gender's importance, and its invisibility, are what allow gender to function so effectively as a common denominator between apparently different discourses.

Although the relationship between gender and US foreign policy is not his focus, Michael Hunt articulates this well:

> By asserting broad propositions about man and society, a nation's self conception provides the intellectual underpinnings – the guiding assumptions and concerns – for foreign policy and may even in crucial respects dictate its terms. By defining what the nation is about and how it relates to the world, it orients thinking, sets conceptual bounds. (1987: 191)

Gender is always-already deployed in arguments about what the world is 'really' like and what it could or should be like, about state identity, and about the possibilities, capacities, motivations and desires of human subjectivity (whether in representations of 'self' or 'other'). We say something about (the perceived unimportance of) gender, and risk reproducing problematically gendered discourses, whenever we leave these sites and intertextual connections un-theorised and unexplored. Given the conventional association of both war (films) and (foreign) policy with men, and the erroneous synonymisation of gender with 'women', I focus on interrogating models of masculinity, which have for too long remained unproblematised in IR.

Investigating the gendered discourses operating in films and speeches entails paying close attention to the language used – especially the symbolic function of metaphors and other tropes – and, in the case of the films, to the images presented. Gender can be read in the bodies that are depicted (in films and speeches), but is also evident in the ways in which institutions, such as Congress or the US military, are described – through, for example, the gendered binaries used to construct characters' and institutions' relational identities. Films' narrative logics are also indicative of gendered structures – for example, it is a cliché of older Hollywood horror films that promiscuous women are 'punished' by being killed before the end of the film.[25] In

[25] See the films *Scream* (1996) and *Scream 2* (1997) for interesting self-reflexive discussions of this point.

looking for evidence of intertextuality, I am most interested in the articulations of masculinity that are valorised in the films and the speeches, as these relate to US identity and, more specifically, to soldiers and veterans, as well as examining the gendering (and racialisation) of 'others' – not only the Vietnamese, but also domestic threats and 'enemies'. I examine, too, explanations of defeat and/or victory, and how gender structures these accounts.

Case Study Selection Methods

Although a common methodological approach underpins the empirical analysis of the speeches and the films, they are very different types of text. To note just two divergences: speeches are a few pages long, while films may exceed two hours in length; presidents give speeches on an almost-daily basis, while only three or four big Vietnam War films, at most, are released in any given year. Therefore, different methods have been used to select the texts. As the analysis of popular culture is central to this thesis, I discuss the selection of the films first.

Vietnam War Films

Examining discourses over time offers a potentially infinite number of texts from which to choose. Rather than selecting films at regular intervals from the last two decades (e.g., every seven years), in isolation from any social or political context, I have structured the selection of the films to correspond loosely with periods following major crises[26] in US domestic and/or foreign policy and world politics because it is in the aftermath of such events that discursive transformations are more likely to occur (and perhaps be more easily identifiable as transformations) and, conversely, that the durability and resilience of particularly sedimented

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[26] In his (1993) *Crises in World Politics: Theory and Reality*, Michael Brecher offers very specific definitions of 'crises', distinguishing between, for example, 'military-security' crises, 'foreign-policy' crises and 'international' crises. An international crisis 'denotes (1) a change in type and/or an increase in intensity of disruptive interactions between two or more states, with a heightened probability of military hostilities; that, in turn, (2) destabilizes their relationship and challenges the structure of an international system' (1993: 3; emphasis and footnotes removed). In contrast, I work with a much looser, inductive conceptualization: by 'crises', I mean periods of flux in US domestic and/or foreign policy and world politics that provide opportunities for radical change, rather than any specific 'problem' requiring a solution.

gendered articulations may be illuminated. These crisis periods are:

- 1973-1975: global oil price-shocks; Watergate; Vietnam;
- 1979-1981: energy crisis; Iranian revolution/hostage crisis; Soviet invasion of Afghanistan;
- 1989-1991: fall of Berlin Wall/collapse of communist regimes/end of Cold War; Gulf War.

The early to mid-1970s was a turbulent period for the United States. The 1973 oil crisis – 'the most damaging and disruptive debacle since the Great Depression' (Tugwell 1988: 1) – dramatically increased oil prices, shaking the world economy 'to its very foundations, precipitating the energy crisis... How to cope with the economic implications of the crisis became, almost overnight, the major preoccupation of governments all round the world' (Rybczynski and Ray 1976: 1). The energy crisis 'was so devastating partly because it forced us [the US] to see ourselves anew' (Tugwell 1988: 1). It

> exposed our [US] economic vulnerability to forces outside of our borders and further eroded confidence in our ability to control events. ... Beyond its direct economic impacts, it changed the way people thought about the future—or, more precisely, it made thinking about the future salient in ways it had never been before. (Russell 1996: xi)

Social changes implemented in the US over the course of 1974 as a result of the oil embargo included a national 55mph speed limit and the introduction of Daylight Saving Time.

The 'Watergate' scandal also came to a head in 1974, with President Nixon resigning on August 9, just ten months after Spiro Agnew, who was facing criminal bribery charges, had been forced to resign the Vice Presidency. Watergate was a 'particularly devastating experience' (Collins 2007: 11) that represented a 'loss of innocence' of the American body politic and changed the landscape of American politics. Watergate '"[s]hook our [nation's] confidence. ... We had a deep, unexamined confidence in the electoral system. The system was messy, but we had come to depend on it to keep us well within the range of safety. And then it didn't"' (Drew quoted in Collins 2007: 11).

The Vietnam War 'followed upon Watergate like the second blow of a vicious one-two punch painfully replayed in slow motion' (Collins 2007: 11). Peace negotiations between the US and North Vietnam began in Paris in 1972 and were signed in January 1973, with American troops withdrawn by April 1973. By early 1975, the North Vietnamese were capturing and holding territory in South Vietnam and Saigon 'fell'/was 'liberated' at the end of April, resulting in a spectacular helicopter airlift of US personnel from the US embassy roof. The total cost of US involvement in Indochina between 1945 and 1975 has been estimated at US$579 billion (BBC 2006b).[27] The 'loss' of/in Vietnam (of the war and 'to' the Communists) had a profound influence on the United States:

> Nowhere was the impact of Vietnam greater than on the [US] nation's foreign policy. The war had shattered the consensus that had existed since the late 1940s, leaving Americans confused and deeply divided on the goals to be pursued and the methods to be used. (Herring 1996: 307)

The outcome of the Vietnam War destabilised accepted notions of US national identity and purpose, as well as US credibility, with Henry Kissinger arguing that 'the disgraceful abandonment of South Vietnam would "affect our ability to conduct an effective foreign policy after it is over"' (Kissinger quoted in Schulzinger 2008: 217). Its manifold legacies collectively came to be known as the Vietnam Syndrome (Simons 1998).

The second crisis period is 1979-1981. By the late 1970s, 'Americans generally agreed... that the United States was in trouble. So was most of the rest of the world. The cause was the situation referred to as the "energy crisis"' (Sobel 1980: 1). After two weeks of sequestration at Camp David, in an attempt to demonstrate his ability to handle the issue, President Carter gave an important speech on 15 July 1979 (Carter 1979d), which became known as the 'malaise' speech, and which evoked 'the image of a nation plunged into crisis' (Horowitz 2005: 13). However, by the end of the year, a new crisis had superseded energy in the nation's daily consciousness. November 4, 1979 marked

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[27] Michael Hunt gives a lower figure of US$350 billion (1996: 312).

> the beginning of the most frustrating foreign policy crisis of the Carter years... The Hostage Crisis came to dominate the administration's attention and the continued failure of the world's most foremost power to liberate its citizens threatened to make the United States look weak internationally. (Hemmer 2000: 47-8; see also Hunt 1996: 377-83)

The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan a few weeks later, on December 24, which compounded the US's sense of impotence in world affairs, leading Carter to announce a new 'Persian Gulf Doctrine' (now the Carter Doctrine) in his 1980 State of the Union address (Carter 1980a), which reversed the 'noninterventionist US role of previous decades' (Yetiv 2004: 19).

The Iranian hostage crisis lasted until January 1981 (52 hostages were held for 444 days). The Carter Administration was unsuccessful in securing the hostages' release, and several rescue attempts had to be aborted, one of which lost 8 military lives, turning the crisis into a tragedy (Houghton 2001: 2-4). There is some speculation that members of Ronald Reagan's election campaign were involved in delaying the hostages' release until after the presidential election, thus ensuring Reagan's victory (Sick 1991). Whether true or not, the release of the hostages coincided with Reagan's inauguration, thereby marking a symbolic end to both the crisis and to American vulnerability: '[t]hough Reagan's approach created a tough set of issues different from the ones Carter faced, to most Americans by the early 1980s the crisis of confidence had ended' (Horowitz 2005: 28).

The final crisis period is 1989-1991. The collapse of the USSR and (most of) the rest of the communist bloc was a gradual process, but the fall of the Berlin Wall which precipitated it was a spectacular event. The removal of border restrictions between communist Hungary and non-communist Austria in August 1989, and 13 000 East German tourists claiming asylum in the West German embassy in Prague (Pond 1993: 96-120) sparked a rapid chain of events, which resulted in the checkpoints between East and West Berlin being opened on 9 November 1989. The 'fall' of the Berlin Wall was both symbolic and literal, as East and West Berliners dismantled it with sledgehammers and pick-axes in the ensuing days and weeks (1-5). Shown live on television across the world, this was perhaps the most important international political event for a half-century. Events in Eastern Germany, demands for reform in

other parts of the communist bloc (both within and outside the USSR), and Gorbachev's unwillingness to use force to crush these movements, led to a wave of anti-communist revolutions across Eastern Europe, to the unification of Germany and, ultimately, to the dissolution of the USSR, the US's bipolar opponent for more than four decades, thereby necessitating a fundamental re-orientation of US foreign policy.

On 2 August, 1990,

> the world witnessed one of the most shocking spectacles of the twentieth century... Iraq did not just attack Kuwait... It attacked all nations that depended on oil at reasonable prices, that feared weapons of mass destruction in the hands of a brutal dictator who never met a weapon he did not use, and that sought to promote the romantic, hopeful concept of a new world order. (Yetiv 1997: 3)

While perhaps overstating his case a little, Steve Yetiv indicates the seriousness with which the US took Saddam Hussein's actions. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait – which became known for a time as the Persian Gulf Crisis (Helms and Dorff 1993) – 'was the first major crisis in the post-Cold War era' (Yetiv 1997: 11). At stake were 'vital interests', in terms of both continued US access to oil and US credibility in light of the Carter Doctrine (Kuniholm 1993: 99-100). On 1 March 1991, after a successful US-led coalition war that forced Iraq out of Kuwait, President Bush triumphantly declared, 'by God, we've kicked the Vietnam Syndrome once and for all' (Bush 1991b).[28]

Having outlined the crisis periods, the three periods from which the films were selected for analysis are:

- 1978-1980
- 1984-1986
- 1994-1996

These periods are situated three to five years after the onset of the above-identified crises, to allow the film industry time to 'process' discursive transformations (since it is not unheard of for films to be in production for two to three years). Having

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[28] By April 1991, however, Bush was warning that 'the United States is not going to intervene militarily in Iraq's internal affairs and risk being drawn into a Vietnam-style quagmire' (Bush 1991c).

established the periods from which the films are to be selected, it is necessary to limit the number of films. I do so with reference to two criteria: narrative content (i.e., Vietnam War films) and popularity/hegemonic status.

As with all discourses, genres are bounded by existing discursive conventions but these boundaries and conventions are never totally or finally fixed. Films often deploy conventions associated with two or more genres, even while people attempt to classify them as belonging to only one. For example, the Internet Movie Database (IMDb) lists several genres for each film because these tags are added by the public. However, in the IMDb Pro database (a premium service offered to fee-paying subscribers), a film only receives one generic classification. That is, if a film is deemed to be 'science fiction,' it cannot also be listed as a war film, and vice versa. An IMDb Pro search is thus defined by the (unspecified) ways in which IMDb Pro determines films' generic classifications.

As Jeanine Basinger comments in her detailed study of the World War II combat film's generic conventions,

> [c]lichés about genre include the idea that they are easily defined and recognized, that they are fixed and never change, that they are based only on recognizable literary devices – such as characters and plots – and that films are either one genre or another. Actually, genres are hard to define, tricky and contradictory. (2003: 7)

Basinger goes on to note that

> "War" is a vague category, and is too broad to contain a basic set of characters and events, the hallmark of a genre. Furthermore, the combat genre tends to have its own subcategories, such as military biographies and the commando raid. ... The war film itself does not exist in a coherent generic form. (9)

However, since I am not interested in establishing the existence of generic conventions *per se*, it does not matter so much that the war genre is fluid and amorphous. Here, films are considered to be Vietnam War films if they include at

least one scene of combat that is diegetically located in Indochina.[29] This is very much a pragmatic definition – you know it when you see it (Weldes 2003: 9).[30]

If interested in unravelling the legacies of the Vietnam War, one need not focus necessarily on films explicitly about Vietnam. *Aliens* (1986) and *Star Wars* (1977), to name just two examples, bear the visible traces of the war, despite being science fiction films set (respectively) in the future and a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away. However, limitations of space mean that choosing films depicting combat in the Vietnam War provides a modicum of coherence to the small body of texts being analysed.

Although films are 'popular culture' by virtue of their mass-production and the media through which they are transmitted, not all films are equally 'popular'. It is not difficult to identify critically-acclaimed films that are neither well-known nor well-loved by many people. I analyse Vietnam War films that are 'popular' (in the sense of financially 'successful') and, as a result of their success, hegemonic. The limited scale of the research, and the fact that statistics are not as comprehensive for the 1970s as for later decades, precludes any complex combination of selection criteria. The films were therefore to be selected according to one simple criterion: appearing in the top five US gross box-office successes in any year in the sample periods. Statistics regarding US box-office rankings were obtained through the IMDB Pro (paid subscriber-only) website (IMDb Pro, no date).

Since no Vietnam War films appeared in the top five US box-office successes in the 1978-1980 sample period, an additional selection criterion was added (to all three periods). A film was selected for analysis if it won an Academy Award (Oscar) for Best Picture in a sample year. Academy Award data was obtained from the official

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[29] Lacey (2000: 19) explains diegesis in the following terms: 'The easiest way to distinguish between the diegetic and the non-diegetic is to consider what characters in the narrative are able to perceive... and what the audience perceives. Characters can only perceive diegetic material whereas the audience, obviously, can perceive everything [sic] a text has to offer, including non-diegetic material.' An example of non- or extra-diegetic material is the scrolling text at the beginning of *Star Wars* (1977).

[30] This definition paraphrases the US Supreme Court ruling on the distinction between art and obscenity, in which Justice Potter Stewart proclaimed, of hard-core pornography, that 'I know it when I see it' (*Jacobellis v. Ohio* [1964] 378 US 184).

Academy Awards Database website (AMPAS, no date). Although Academy Awards are recognition of elite approval rather than mass consumption, the majority of films that are nominated for 'mainstream' Oscars (as opposed to those nominated for, say, the Foreign Film or Short Live Action Film categories) are also popular, above and beyond the opinions of the elites that judge the annual event. Moreover, the Oscars are themselves a popular cultural institution: the award ceremony regularly attracts a television audience of 30–40 million people in the US (BBC 2006a) – roughly the same number as for State of the Union audiences. Finally, the elite approval that results in an Academy Award win strengthens, rather than undermines, claims about a film's hegemonic status.

Table 1.1: Vietnam War Films Meeting the Selection Criteria

Film Title	Year	US Box-Office Ranking	Academy Award Nominations	Academy Awards Won	'Best Picture' Academy Award Won?	Film Selection Criterion
The Deer Hunter	1978	–	9	5	Yes	Academy Award
Rambo: First Blood, Part II	1985	2	1	0	No	box-office ranking
Platoon	1986	3	8	4	Yes	[not included]
Forrest Gump	1994	1	13	6	Yes	box-office ranking

Titles in **bold** have been selected for inclusion in this study.
Sources: http://awardsdatabase.oscars.org/ampas_awards/BasicSearchInput.jsp, http://pro.imdb.com.

Applying these two criteria to the sample periods resulted in four films being identified: one from the 1970s (*The Deer Hunter*), two from the 1980s (*Rambo: First Blood: Part II* and *Platoon*) and one from the 1990s (*Forrest Gump*) (see table 1.1). For reasons of space, only one film per sample period can be analysed. Therefore, the films' positions in the box-office rankings in the 1984-86 sample period were compared and the highest-ranked film (*Rambo: First Blood, Part II*) selected.

None of these three films is considered a 'typical' Vietnam War film: *The Deer Hunter* contains only three minutes of combat, and more of the film is set in the US than Vietnam; *Rambo II* is set in 1985, many years after US forces withdrew from Southeast Asia; *Forrest Gump* touches on many different aspects of US socio-political history from the 1950s to the 1980s. However, the Vietnam War is central to all three narratives and, in each case, the protagonist is profoundly affected and motivated by his experiences in that conflict. For example, many of *Forrest Gump*'s flashbacks are explicitly connected with the military, with the conflict and with its aftermath. Forrest joins the army within the first half-hour and is sent to Vietnam approximately forty minutes into the film. Although only 15 minutes of the film are 'in-country', the remainder of the 136-minute diegesis deals with Forrest's experiences as a Vietnam veteran (including his participation in an anti-war rally) as well as those of his close friend and veteran, Lieutenant Dan.

In the next section, I outline the criteria used to create the corpus of speeches. I discuss the decision to focus on inaugural and State of the Union addresses, as well as the rationale behind the construction of a supplementary corpus, which consists of speeches identified as (potentially) particularly relevant for their content.

US Presidential Speeches

On 21 October 1978, President Carter gave remarks at seven separate events, as well as making an official statement on the occasion of signing House Resolution 8533 into law (Woolley and Peters, no date). Nothing particularly important was happening on this day (although it is the day on which I was born), nor was it an especially busy day for President Carter, who, over the course of that month, was responsible for the creation of some 170 presidential documents of various kinds. In total, more than 1500 texts are listed for Carter in the American Presidency Project for 1978 (Woolley & Peters, no date). Presidents Johnson, Nixon, Ford and Carter averaged one public speech per work day (Smith 1983: 613). In his short tenure in the White House, President Ford spoke some 2,055,000 words and signed his name to a million more (Hartmann quoted in Stuckey 1991: 99). Indeed, during the Bicentennial celebrations, Ford delivered, on average, a public speech every six hours

(Hart 1987: xx). Reagan spoke 'nearly 4 million words of prepared text... crafted into nearly 2,500 sets of remarks' over the course of his two administrations, which included 'twenty formal speeches... weekly radio talks, and... three press conferences' in a typical month (Muir 2003: 196). I provide these statistics as examples of the overwhelming volume of official presidential documents.

Of course, speeches are typically not written by presidents themselves alone. Since George Washington, who was aided by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay (Medhurst 2003a: 4), presidents have had varying depths of authorial input into, and requested different levels of speechwriting assistance with, the speeches they give.[31] A president's speechwriters can 'bring to presidential speeches interests of [their] own that conflict with presidential policy' (Ceaser *et al*. 1981: 165-6). However, presidents are not speech-writers' puppets: '[w]hile presidents seldom do a first draft of their speeches, they are often highly involved in both the subsequent drafting and editing processes' (Medhurst 2003a: 8). Speeches are 'the product of the president in some manner' and presidents are understood to claim their speeches 'as their own at some point before delivery' (Whissel and Sigelman 2001: 256).

In their longitudinal generic analysis of presidential rhetoric, Campbell and Jamieson (1990) argue that, while 'in some instances, the use of varied speechwriters has created presidencies that present different faces on different occasions' (11), their findings indicate that

> despite such variations... a definable rhetorical presidency emerged from ... the Gerald Ford who sometimes made contradictory statements on succeeding days, and... [from] Jimmy Carter who attempted to stitch together in a single speech the disparate views of Zbigniew Brzezinski and Cyrus Vance. (11)

Proceeding from 'the assumption that the discourse claimed by a president constitutes that presidency as a rhetorical entity' (11), I argue that, whether or not

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[31] See Metcalf (2004: ch.4); Ritter and Medhurst (2003); Schlesinger (2008); Hult and Walcott (1998); Gavin (2001).

they are internally coherent or consistent over time, presidents' speeches fairly accurately reflect the sentiments that presidents wish to convey to the nation.

As with films, presidential rhetoric is often conducted through genre analysis (Medhurst 1996a: xx; see, e.g., Campbell and Jamieson 1990; Stuckey 1992; Beasley 2004). Again, although 'one cannot "know" in a simple, final sense' the boundaries of a particular genre, (Campbell and Jamieson 1990: 8), particular types of speech – for example, nomination acceptance speeches or farewell addresses – are considered to constitute genres. While there are valuable insights to be gleaned from examining the genre of speeches that focuses on foreign policy, and/or those which deal with crises, not all presidents have had equal 'opportunities to craft such messages' (Beasley 2004: 12). Since one of the aims of this study is to compare representations of US identity over time, and across administrations, it is preferable to analyse speeches of a type delivered by all presidents. I focus primarily on two presidential speech genres: inaugurals and State of the Union addresses.

The 'predictable frequency' (Beasley 2004: 12) with which these speeches are delivered (every four years in the case of inaugurals, and more or less annually for States of the Union) 'provide[s] a consistent means of rhetorical examination' (Teten 2003: 335), allowing the articulations therein to be more easily contrasted with one another. Furthermore, instead of examining 'what individual presidents have said about their constituents' national identity in speeches specifically designed to respond to issues or events that have threatened it' (Beasley 2004: 7) or viewing the 'contrived nature' of inaugurals and states of the union 'as a detriment to what they can reveal about the culture, one might view them instead as *especially* meaningful' (12, original emphasis) precisely because they permit us 'to pay closer attention to some of the platitudinous and perhaps even predictable ways in which multiple presidents have asked the American people to think of' US identity (7).

The other reason for choosing inaugurals and States of the Union is because they are the most popular speeches, in the sense that they receive the largest television audiences. Televised addresses 'are often portrayed as the president's ultimate political weapon in shaping the nation's agenda'' (Welch 2003a: 347) and these

speeches 'continue to permeate the public consciousness through news reports in the days following their address' (Wattenberg 2004: 557). Inaugural and State of the Union addresses are shown on TV in free air time provided by the networks (in the case of the State of the Union addresses, since 1965, in prime time).[32] Although definitive statistics are not available for specific speeches, table 1.2 shows the average Nielsen television ratings for the televised addresses of the five presidents discussed in this thesis.

Table 1.2: Average Nielsen Ratings for US Presidents' Televised Speeches

President	Average Nielsen Rating
Ford	48
Carter	49
Reagan	38
Bush	34
Clinton	29

Source: adapted from Baum and Kernell in Wattenberg (2004: 559).

While a decline in audience ratings can be identified, beginning in the Reagan era and coinciding with the rise of VCRs, cable and the number of channels available to TV audiences (Baum and Kernell in Welch 2003a: 349), and while televised speeches offer a president only 'limited success in even communicating his message to the public' (Welch 2003a: 362), it remains the case that a president has no better opportunity to garner national attention (363). The highest and lowest television audience figures for recent State of the Union addresses have been estimated as 66.9 million for Bill Clinton's 'unofficial' State of the Union in 1993 and 31.5 million for his 2000 State of the Union address, respectively (*Electronic Media*, cited in Kolakowski and Neale 2006: 4).[33]

The time parameters for speech-selection map loosely onto those for the films, but the time covered by the speeches is continuous rather than three separate periods, primarily because speeches are shorter – and therefore more easily analysed – than films. Including more speeches should also increase the possibility of identifying

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[32] Lyndon Johnson was the first to move the State of the Union address from its afternoon slot to 9pm, a practice which has continued to this day (Kolakowski and Neale 2006: 4).

[33] Crisis speeches 'involving the military' are the most-watched speeches (Welch 2003b: 870).

intertextual connections (or divergences). The parameters of the corpus of speeches are 7 May 1975 to 31 December 1996 (inclusive). The decision to extend the parameters for the speeches to 1975 (as opposed to 1 January 1977) is based on two factors:

- speech-writers respond much more quickly than can film-makers to unfolding political events;
- on 7 May 1975, Gerald Ford officially declared an end to the 'Vietnam era' (1975a), making this a good starting-point for analysing representations in/of the aftermath of the Vietnam War.

The primary corpus of speeches comprises all orally-delivered (and therefore televised) inaugural and State of the Union addresses given between 7 May 1975 and 31 December 1996. These were obtained through the American Presidency Project (Woolley and Peters, no date). Three 'unofficial State of the Union' addresses – given by Reagan, Bush (Senior) and Clinton – are also included in the primary corpus because their designation indicates that they are considered to be in the same category as official State of the Union addresses.[34] The addition of these three speeches results in a primary corpus of 26 speeches (see table 1.3, below).

Selecting and reading speeches on the basis of their genre could encourage the analyst to prioritise the search for unity within administrations and for similarity across presidents (Campbell and Jamieson 1990: 9). As a counterbalance to this tendency, I supplement the primary corpus with other presidential documents, also obtained through the American Presidency Project, selected by keyword searches. I could have created the supplementary corpus by selecting speeches on the basis of their audience (e.g., Veterans of Foreign Wars), or a commemorative event (Veterans

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[34] Gerhard Peters, of the American Presidency Project, argues that '[f]or research purposes, it is probably harmless to categorize these as State of the Union messages since the impact of such a speech on public, media, and congressional perceptions of presidential leadership and power should be the same as if the address was an official State of the Union' (Peters, no date). Indeed, as noted above, Clinton's 1993 'unofficial' State of the Union received the highest audience rating of any State of the Union address of recent times (*Electronic Media* quoted in Kolakowski and Neale 2006: 4). The titles of these three 'unofficial' 'State of the Union' addresses are: 'Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the Program for Economic Recovery' (Reagan 1981b); 'Address on Administration Goals Before a Joint Session of Congress' (Bush 1989b); and 'Address Before a Joint Session of Congress on Administration Goals' (Clinton 1993b).

Day, Memorial Day). However, these smaller speeches are 'geared specifically to a certain audience with a very specific message delivered' (Teten 2003: 336) and exhibit 'considerable variety, depending on who presidents are addressing' (Hinckley 1990: 103). This variation would add another layer of unwieldy complexity for the analyst interested in identifying similarities, trends and differences over time.

Table 1.3: US Presidents' Inaugural and State of the Union Addresses, 1975-1996

	Inaugural	State of the Union	State of the Union	State of the Union	State of the Union
Ford	[not applicable]			1976	1977a
Carter	1977a	1978	1979a	1980a	[not included][35]
Reagan	1981a	**1981b**	1982	1983	1984a
	1985a	1985b	1986	1987	1988a
Bush	1989a	**1989b**	1990	1991a	1992a
Clinton	1993a	**1993b**	1994	1995a	1996a

Years in **bold** indicate 'unofficial' State of the Union addresses.
Letters indicate the relevant Harvard citation used throughout the thesis.
Sources: http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/inaugurals.php,
http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/sou.php.

An initial search of the American Presidency Project for the keyword

- "Vietnam" appearing anywhere in the text

(in the period 7 May 1975 – 31 December 1996, inclusive) returned 1176 documents.

Limiting the search to

- "Vietnam*" AND "war" appearing anywhere in the text

(in the same timeframe) reduced this figure to 1016.[36]

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[35] Jimmy Carter's final State of the Union Address (Carter 1981) was excluded from the corpus because it was not delivered orally but, rather, only in written form and – at just under 34,000 words long – is therefore unlikely to have reached as wide an audience.

[36] * indicates truncation symbol – e.g., Vietnam* will return results not only for the exact

Restricting the search to

- "Vietnam War" appearing anywhere in the text

produced 217 results – still too many to analyse here.

Documents were then to be selected on the basis of the keywords

- "Vietnam*" AND "war" appearing in the TITLE.

However, no documents contained both words in the title (an interesting if unhelpful finding).

Searching for documents containing

- "Vietnam*" AND "conflict" in the TITLE

generated just two results, both given by Ronald Reagan during one week in May 1984 (Reagan 1984b, 1984c).

A search for documents containing

- "war" in the title AND 'Vietnam*" in the text

generated 25 documents. However, an initial reading of these documents revealed that, in many cases, Vietnam was merely reeled off in a litany of foreign wars.

In order to find speeches which discussed the Vietnam War, the search parameters were therefore reversed:

- "Vietnam*" in the title AND "war" in the text

which generated 21 documents.

These documents were then skim-read for relevance and three documents were discarded from the corpus on the basis that "war" occurred within the words "awarded" or "awareness". The remaining 18 documents comprise the supplementary corpus and are listed in full in Appendix 1 (as well as in the bibliography). The types of documents forming the supplementary corpus include Remarks (11), Proclamations (3), Statements (2) and Letters (2). A total of 44 presidential texts (5 inaugurals, 21 States of the Union and 18 other documents) are thus analysed in this thesis.

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match 'Vietnam' but also 'Vietnams' and 'Vietnamese'.

Chapter Outline

The thesis is structured as follows: in chapter 2, I unpack the theoretical framework of the thesis and show how this framework relates to the methods and concepts operationalised in the empirical (discursive and visual) analysis of the speeches and films. First, I outline the concepts of discourse and discursivity, and the articulation and interpellation of meaning and identity. Next, I discuss how this approach conceptualises power and hegemony, before discussing in more detail the concepts of texts and (inter)textuality. After exploring some of the ways in which gender can be read from and into texts, I turn to the analytical strategies – linguistic, visual and intertextual – deployed in the thesis. Finally, I reflect on my own subject-positioning and its implications for the research design and analysis.

The study's empirical chapters begin with the analysis of presidential speeches in chapter 3. After situating the thesis within the scholarly literature examining inaugurals and State of the Union, I discuss US presidents' representations in chronological order, from Gerald Ford, through Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George Bush and Bill Clinton. I focus on constructions of the Vietnam War, of US identity, strength and leadership in world affairs, and of the US military, soldiers and veterans (especially Vietnam veterans). The Vietnam War is presented by all five presidents as a traumatic wound to US identity and a divisive issue in US foreign policy, and the responses to this trauma are to emphasise the need for renewed US strength and leadership in world affairs, a claim that attempts to 'remasculinise' the US state. Under Reagan and, later, Bush, the Vietnam War is articulated as a noble cause, by rhetorically linking it to other more legitimate conflicts, such as the two World Wars. In the post-Cold War era, both Bush and Clinton focus less on international enemies and more on domestic threats, which builds on the feminisation of domestic US society as responsible for the loss in/of Vietnam and the subsequent decline of US power seen in 1980s representations.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 analyse the films. Each film is first analysed independently of the other films included in the study and independently of the analysis of the speeches. This independence, and the concept of intertextuality itself, led to differences in

chapter structure and content. Four factors have influenced this:

- *The Deer Hunter* was not only popularly successful, but also critically acclaimed. As a result, numerous reviews were published at the time of its release and in subsequent years, while engagement with *Rambo II* and *Forrest Gump* has been relatively insignificant by comparison.
- *Rambo II* and *Forrest Gump* are both explicitly intertexts, in that they are indebted to source-material, in the form of original novels (Morrell 1973 [1972]; Groom 1994 [1986]) and, in *Rambo II*'s case, a prior film as well (*First Blood* [1982]). In contrast, while intertextual references can be identified in *The Deer Hunter* (for example, with James Fenimore Cooper's *The Deerslayer* [1962 (1841)]), it is essentially a stand-alone film.

These two factors mean that, while each chapter begins with a section outlining the relevant context of each film's production, in the case of *The Deer Hunter*, this context is film reviews, while, for *Rambo II* and *Forrest Gump*, it is the source-material.

- *The Deer Hunter* and *Rambo II* are heavily indebted to the Western genre for their narrative logics, while *Forrest Gump* is not.

Therefore, chapter 6 does not contain a discussion of the Western genre at work.

- Finally, the film-lengths vary: *The Deer Hunter* is 176 minutes long; *Rambo II* is just 97 minutes long; *Forrest Gump* is 136 minutes long.

Without wishing to suggest that the length of a film determines its narrative complexity, or the detail of the analysis that can be conducted, to a certain extent the differences in chapter-length reflect differences in film-length.

In chapter 4, I analyse the gendered representations and logics at work in *The Deer Hunter* in the context of the genre and US foundational myth of the Western. I begin by situating the analysis of the film in the context of its reception by critics, before discussing male bonding and the possibility of a queer reading of the film. I then present John Hellmann's (1982, 1986) account of *The Deer Hunter* as offering a destabilisation of the Western's function as the US national myth, in order to argue, *contra* Hellmann, that, although *The Deer Hunter* inverts some of the traditional associations of this myth, the film remains locked in binary constructions of gender and race and that, in particular, the film's ambiguous and ambivalent final scene fails

to undermine these, such that the scene can be read as co-opting women into a national project of remasculinisation.

In chapter 5, after a critical overview of some of the representational and narrative shifts from Morrell's original novel to the 1982 film of *First Blood*, I revisit the Western genre in my analysis of *Rambo: First Blood, Part II*, arguing that *Rambo II* works to re-establish the conventional Western narrative structure that may have been (temporarily) undermined in *The Deer Hunter*. I also draw on Steve Neale's (1983) discussion of masculinity as spectacle in mainstream cinema, in order to evaluate the importance of the hypermasculine bodily figure of John Rambo (Sylvester Stallone) to the film's narrative. I then turn to a discussion of the hierarchisation and feminisation of enemies in *Rambo II* – the Vietnamese, the Russians and the US government, as embodied in the character of Murdock, the CIA operative. I argue that, while the spectacle of violence in *Rambo II* permits a re-reading of the Vietnam War in which the veteran is valorised as the ideal model of US masculinity, this is ultimately itself an unstable basis for the remasculinisation of US men.

Chapter 6 discusses the ways in which the narrative and imagery of *Forrest Gump* are gendered. Again, I begin with a discussion of the novel as source material, drawing particular attention to those changes made in the translation from novel to screenplay. Although not a Western, the film also perpetuates many of the same gendered binaries and deepens the feminisation of domestic society as responsible of the loss (of masculinity) in Vietnam. However, the hegemonic model of masculinity presented in the character of Forrest is gendered differently from *Rambo II*. After highlighting how Forrest is a quintessential, if somewhat unexpected, model of hegemonic US masculinity, I discuss the ways in which the US's racial history, its actions in Vietnam, and the domestic upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s, are re-inscribed in the film, arguing that the post-Cold War model of hegemonic masculinity is based less on physical strength and more on the caring 'new man'.
In the final analytical chapter (chapter 7), I draw the previous four chapters together in an intertextual reading, highlighting the similarities and tensions, continuities and transformations both within each discursive context over time and across the two

discourses. I demonstrate the high degree of homogeneity between the constructions within the five presidents' speeches, particularly in terms of the binary metaphors and attributes upon which US identity is predicated, as well as in their valorisation of the Vietnam veteran. I discuss the three different models of hegemonic masculinity offered in the films, and how the narrative structures used to account for defeat in Vietnam have changed – most notably, in the disappearance of the Western as the myth for understanding US identity. Finally, in contrasting the speeches against the films, I show how remarkably similar are the articulations presented by these two disparate textual types, and also reflect upon the differences between them, and some of the reasons for, and discursive effects of these divergences.

In the conclusion (chapter 8), I summarise the original contributions of the research and reflect upon some of the limitations of the project, in terms of both the research design/data set and the limits of intertextual analysis as an analytical approach. I also offer some a few thoughts on possible directions for future research, specifically the need to conduct more research into audiences' own meanings of popular cultural texts and practices.

The four appendices contain full details of the speeches included in the supplementary corpus (by president) (Appendix 1) and brief summaries of the narratives of each of the three films (Appendices 2, 3 and 4). A filmography and a list of television shows mentioned in the thesis are provided immediately before the bibliography.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Analytical Strategies

Tell me how *you are searching and I will tell you* what *you are searching for.*
(Ludwig Wittgenstein quoted in Genova 1995: xiv, original emphasis)

You've already made the choice. Now you have to understand it.
(Oracle, *Matrix Reloaded*, 2003)

VINCENT	*But you know what the funniest thing about Europe is?*
JULES	*What?*
VINCENT	*It's the little differences. I mean, they got the same shit over there that they got here, but it's just, it's just, there, it's a little different.*
JULES	*Example?*
VINCENT	*Alright, well, you can walk into a movie theatre in Amsterdam and buy a beer. And I don't mean just like in no paper cup, I'm talking about a glass of beer. And in Paris, you can buy a beer in McDonald's. You know what they call a Quarter Pounder with Cheese in Paris?*
JULES	*They don't call it a Quarter Pounder with Cheese?*
VINCENT	*No, man, they got the metric system there, they wouldn't know what the fuck a Quarter Pounder is.*
JULES	*Then what do they call it?*
VINCENT	*They call it a Royale with Cheese.*
JULES	*Royale with Cheese.*
VINCENT	*That's right.*
JULES	*What do they call a Big Mac?*
VINCENT	*A Big Mac's a Big Mac, but they call it Le Big Mac.*
JULES	*(imitating a French accent) Le Big Mac.*
	(Laughs)
	What do they call a Whopper?
VINCENT	*I don't know, I didn't go into Burger King.*

(*Pulp Fiction*, 1994)

Introduction

This excerpt from *Pulp Fiction*, although not one of the sample films, encapsulates the themes and concepts I unpack in this chapter. The subtle differences between European and US cultures demonstrate how our everyday understandings are based on our ontological and epistemological assumptions about the world, and how discursive practices create meaning. In this example, the imperial and metric systems, different languages, and national cultures, are articulated with food to

produce different 'things' that have meanings for the subjects consuming them (both the food and the discourses). Ontology and epistemology are crucial to academic research because they are fundamental to claims about knowledge. As David Marsh and Paul Furlong argue, the ontological and epistemological positions assumed by social scientists are 'reflected in what is studied, how it is studied and the status the researcher gives to their findings' (2002: 17, 21). Indeed, the researcher's position is not merely reflected in what is studied but is constitutive of what is studied and how.

This study draws upon a variety of literary, social and cultural theorists. In this chapter I outline the theoretical influences and assumptions that frame the project and that generate the methods and conceptual tools deployed in the analysis. The concepts I discuss here are: the discursive realm, discourses and the discursive practices of articulation and interpellation; power and hegemony, and how culture, specifically policy and popular culture, relate to issues of power and hegemony; texts and intertextuality, and the concept of representation; and the discursive construction of gender. I then discuss the discursive and visual analytical strategies I deploy in the thesis, and the practicalities of reading written and visual texts, as well as the method of reading these texts 'intertextually'. Finally, I reflect on my own subject-position and its impact on the research design and empirical analysis.

The Discursive Realm

The central analytical concept is the 'discursive realm', or 'field of discursivity' (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 111). The discursive realm is co-extensive with the world, in that '[a]ll "things" – states, subjects, objects, feelings, interests, processes, practices, relationships – only come to have meaning' (Rowley and Weldes 2008: 187; Hall 1997a: 1), and meaningful existence, through the signifiers – linguistic, visual, symbolic – that we use to describe, connote and understand these things (Shapiro 1985-6: 193). While there may be a 'real' world beyond the horizons of discursivity, it remains inaccessible to us: the world is the totality of the signifiers, or meaningful discursive constructions, available to us. Social reality is only knowable insofar as we are subjects of (constituted by) discourse. This commitment does not privilege the

ideational over the material; rather, it subverts the notion of an ideational/material dichotomy. This formulation

> rejects the distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices. It affirms a) that every object is constituted as an object of discourse, insofar as no object is given outside every discursive condition of emergence; and b) that any distinction between what are usually called the linguistic and behaviourial [sic] aspects of a social practice, is either an incorrect distinction or ought to find its place as a differentiation *within* the social production of meaning. (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 107, original emphasis)

Language is not a stable, neutral or transparent medium of communication that unproblematically describes some pre-existing reality. As Terrell Carver explains, 'we use language to inscribe meanings into the world – whether into or onto objects, or experiences – and then we read those meanings back to ourselves as if they had always resided in the objects or experiences as such' (2002: 50). Even bodily sensations, such as fear or pain, are 'filtered through discursive structures which assign particular meanings and effects to them' (Mills 2003: 56). When a doctor asks a patient to 'describe the pain', for example, 'on a scale of 1-10', or 'is it a stabbing pain or a dull ache?', the meanings that these signifiers hold for doctor and patient, and their commensurability, are assumed but can never be 'proven'. The implications of this claim are profound: representational mechanisms such as '[s]ynonymy, metonymy [and] metaphor are not forms of thought that add a second sense to a primary, constitutive literality of social relations; instead, they are part of the primary terrain itself in which the social is constituted' (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 110; Shapiro 1985-6).

A commitment to the discursive constitution of meaning does not imply a monolithic or homogeneous view of discourse as existing in the singular, or as a rigid and immutable structure. While the above articulation may resemble a foundational approach or meta- narrative, the crucial aspect to stress is that the totality of the discursive realm can never be fully comprehended. Claiming that the world is socially constructed raises many more questions (and destabilises many more truths) than it provides answers.

Discourses and Discursive Practices

Within the discursive realm we can identify different discourses. Discourses are 'codes' or 'grids' of 'intelligibility' (Hall in Weldes 1999a: 118; Milliken 1999: 229-30), systems and practices of signification, of intersubjective meaning-production. Discourses do not only constitute that which can be known (object-knowledges), they also posit relations of significance between subjects and objects (articulation), and they construct identities, hailing individuals into subject-positions constituted by these discursive practices (interpellation). I discuss these concepts in more detail below.

The discursive realm is a backdrop that encompasses the ever-present surplus of meaning (Derrida 2000; Laclau and Mouffe 2001), a repository of discursive potentialities out of which multiple, historically contingent discursive formations are constructed. Discursive practices limit and fix this surplus of meaning as 'an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre' (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 112). This fixing of meaning is always temporary, always political and always fundamentally deferred, that is, never entirely secured or finally completed. Discourses are both structures and practices: 'they comprise the rules that govern what can be said (language as structure), as well as instances of what *is* said (language as practice) that can lead to changes in those rules' (Rowley and Weldes 2008: 190, original emphasis; see also Laffey and Weldes 2004: 28). Meaning, then, requires constant *iteration*.[1] The iterability of discourses comprises both their repetition and their alterability, their maintenance and transformation. To emphasise the materiality of discourse, we can think of these as processes of discursive sedimentation and erosion. Discourses are open, despite their attempts to achieve closure; and dynamic, despite their pretence of stability. Discourses intersect, overlap, permeate and cross-pollinate each other.

The fluidity of definitions of 'biological sex' highlights how discursive potentialities are (only ever) temporarily fixed. (I use the example of sex here to illustrate the

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[1] Judith Butler uses 'reiteration' (Butler 1993: 187 and *passim*). I find the 're' prefix superfluous, since it is already implied in 'iteration.'

constitutive function of discourse, although I return to the discussion of gender later in this chapter.) In the past, sex was defined with reference to human genitalia; in the twentieth century, with the 'discovery' of genetics, X and Y chromosomes superseded genitalia as the fundamental signifier of sex; the medical establishment was thus (en)able(d) to tell some people that they were not 'really' the sex they had previously assumed (Kessler 1990: 3, 5). More recently, the terms of the discourse have shifted again, to incorporate hormones as an index of sex. Even more recently, the X/Y chromosomal dichotomy is being displaced in favour of a more complex picture of the interactions between a number of genes (Wright 2009). In a very real sense, then, discourses are 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault 1972: 49), which, in discourses of sex, are the object-knowledges 'men' and 'women', 'males' and 'females' and, more recently, 'transsexuals' and 'intersexed' people, among others.

The power of discourse to create the object-knowledge 'woman' – as well as the inherent instability of this object-knowledge-creation – is evident in the recent case of Caster Semenya, a South African athlete who was nearly stripped of her 2009 World Championship 800m gold medal, and was forced to undergo a series of invasive sex verification tests, in order to 'prove' that she was a woman (Dreger 2009, Clarey 2009). The following statement in the *New York Times* from November 2009 highlights the slippage between 'female' and 'woman' and is revealing for its admission that categories such as female and woman are produced rather than essential and stable: '[i]t is unclear what the exact threshold is, in the eyes of the I.A.A.F., for a female athlete's being ineligible to compete as a woman' (Longman 2009).

'The concept of discourse is essentially open-ended' in this framework (Rowley and Weldes 2008: 189). It can apply at many levels and to many different features of the world. Seemingly disparate discourses share Wittgensteinian family resemblances (see Glock 1996: 120-4) that enable us to identify them as discourses, whether in form or content: we may talk of economic or religious discourses, of the academic disciplines of sociology or IR as discourses, or, if we wish to be even more specific, realist, feminist or constructivist discourses of IR. Organisations and institutions are

often understood to have 'their "own"' discourses, such that we may talk of an IMF or Bretton Woods discourse (Rowley and Weldes 2008: 189).

Cinema, literature, and music, and genres therein, are also examples of discourses. Other discourses may be harder to identify, being less formally 'institutionalised,' and seemingly 'cutting across' other discourses. The science fiction genre, for example, can be identified in cinema, television and literature, as well as in other sites (e.g., advertisements). Foucault highlights discourses that are less immediately apparent, such as those of madness (1967), criminality (1979) and sexuality (1990, 1992, 1998). Some discourses are personal, very limited in temporal or spatial extent – references, phrases and experiences shared by people that have known each other for a long time, for example. Meta-narratives such as 'Western philosophy,' 'Christianity' or 'positivism' are also analysable as (very broad) discourses (Rowley and Weldes 2008: 190).

Articulation and Interpellation

Within discourses, elements are *articulated* – discursively linked – 'such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice' through which they become discursive moments (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 105; Weldes 1999b: 98-103). One way of visualising this concept is as an articulated lorry: the driver's cab and the trailer are two 'separate' entities that become something more than the sum of their parts when connected by hydraulic cables. Moreover, any cab can in principle be linked to any trailer – '[i]t is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time' (Hall 1986: 53). Articulation highlights both the properties specific to the articulated moment as well as its ultimate contingency/arbitrariness. These articulations do not stand alone, but are connected into long chains of multiple discursive signifiers/moments, which together make up discourses. So, for example, concepts such as 'the domino effect' and 'containment' do not make sense in isolation but are articulated to/with other elements invoked alongside them, to create a (seemingly) coherent and commonsensical view of Cold War world politics and US foreign policy.

Flags provide good examples of discursive articulations: they can be signifiers of (aspirations for) statehood, unification, secession, patriotism, surrender, piracy, a death in the (Royal) family, or outstanding needlework. They function differently when waved in surrender, burnt in protest, draped over coffins, captured by enemy troops, planted by occupying forces, unfurled on the moon, flourished at football matches or displayed at a flower show. But their meanings are not inherent to some unchanging notion of 'flagness.' They require articulation with other elements. Recognising the ways in which flags can be 'brought to mean' in this way highlights the multiplicity of discourses and the variety of possible articulations within these discourses.

As well as constructing object-knowledges through articulatory processes, discourses *interpellate* or 'hail' subjects into different positions (Althusser 1971: 170-83; Weldes 1999b: 103-7), some of whom are author-ised to speak/write/act – to make intelligible and produce truths about, these objects – and some as audiences for these author-ised actors. This is not to say that audiences do not also participate in meaning-making processes, but the rather different point that author-ised actors attempt to invoke particular fixed and limited meanings for these audiences, while also attempting to obscure or deny both alternative articulations and the very process of meaning-fixation itself. People can be, and are, variously interpellated as authors and audiences within different discursive formations (a doctor is authorised to speak as an expert within medical discourse, but is more likely to be interpellated as an audience-member for political discourses, for instance).

Utilising the example of flags once more, from the contexts in which they are deployed, we might identify, presidents, monarchs, soldiers, pirates, boy scouts, sports fans, angry publics, and patriotic citizens, among others, all of whom could variously be interpellated as subjects (actors or audiences) – or, indeed, articulated as objects – depending upon the terms and context of the particular discourse. As highlighted in the previous chapter, US presidents are interpellated as having unparalleled authority to articulate US history and identity and to interpellate the US people in particular ways.

Niccolò Machiavelli offered a particularly pertinent gendered and militarised example of interpellation in the sixteenth century:

> one often notices that if a person plans to excel in military life, he not only immediately changes his way of dressing but also his habits, his customs, and his voice, thus setting himself apart from every civilian custom. For he cannot believe that he who seeks to be ready for any sort of violence can wear civilian clothes; nor can civilian habits and practices be followed by one who judges these practices to be effeminate and these customs to be useless to his profession; nor does it appear suitable to retain normal behavior and speech when he wishes to terrify other men with his beard and his curses. (1979: 483)

Machiavelli describes the ways in which a Renaissance-era Florentine man interpellates himself as 'soldier,' in contrast to the civilians from which he wishes to distinguish himself. Distinctions between military and civilian life are articulated through clothing, comportment, habits/customs and voice/modes of speech. The particular masculinity of soldiering is connected with a beard and with cursing, thus articulating 'clean-shavenness' and polite speech with the femininity (effeminacy) of civilians, i.e., 'not-soldiers'. We can also read this quote as informative of how Machiavelli himself interpellates the ideal soldier. Finally, in drawing attention to the material implications and effects of discursive practices, it demonstrates that 'identity is a condition that has depth, is multilayered, possesses texture, and comprises many dimensions' (Campbell 1998: 74).

Object-knowledges and subject-positions (identities) can be and are contested, by subjects interpellated in and through other discourses, or at the margins of discourses, by dis-articulating and re-articulating discursive constructions such that they take on new meanings. But discourses also 'define knowledgeable practices... disciplining techniques... [that] mak[e] other modes of categorizing and judging meaningless, impracticable, inadequate or otherwise disqualified' (Milliken 1999: 229) – author-isation is one such practice – thereby rendering some knowledges more accepted, acceptable and legitimate than others, such that some discourses and articulations acquire dominant and even hegemonic status.

Power, Hegemony and Culture

These discursive practices and disciplining techniques entail power relations. Power cannot be separated from the production of knowledge (Foucauldians refer to this as 'power/knowledge' [Gordon 1980]); indeed, knowledge is produced by and productive of power. As Foucault argues,

> If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression. (1980: 119)

This conception of power refuses to see power as a fixed entity to be possessed, such as the power 'of A over B', or the power of an agent to act, since these formulations imply a transhistorical and universal notion of power, with prior-existing subjects, rather than one specific to the particular and historically contingent discursive conditions, in which subjects are themselves discursive effects.

Through the production of concepts and categories, discourses' disciplining techniques both constrain and enable the production of knowledge: 'Certain elites, or powerful institutional actors, play privileged roles in the (re)production of discursive constructions. ... State officials'... representations have immediate *prima facie* plausibility' (Rowley and Weldes 2008: 191). Elected officials have been chosen to speak for the public, and they and are assumed to be 'experts' because of the experience they have gained over time and in the context of their privileged access to other elite actors, to high-level negotiations and to secret policy and intelligence information. Discourses from protestors which critique US policy elites do not carry the same legitimacy, although the legitimacy of these counter-discourses is increased if they are articulated by other elites (e.g., academics or opposition parties).

A discourse's *dominance* is different from its *hegemony*. Hegemony is 'the production of consent' (Hall 1982: 85), the process(es) of 'the coordination of the

interests of a dominant group with the general interests of other groups and the life of the state as a whole' (Gramsci in Hall 1986: 14-15). People consent to the ways in which discourses are articulated and how they are interpellated into particular subject-positions within these discourses. Hall makes three important points about hegemony: first, hegemony is 'a very particular, historically specific, and temporary "moment" in the life of a society', and must be constantly reinscribed. Second, hegemony has a 'multi-dimensional, multi-arena character,' that operates in a variety of seemingly discrete spheres (economic, political, cultural, social) and that is secured, however temporarily, through the production of consent rather than through the exercise of force (alone). Finally, the dominant group in such a period of hegemony is a 'historical bloc', such that each hegemonic social formation has 'its own, specific social composition and configuration' (Hall 1986: 15).

This 'social composition and configuration' can be theorised in terms of culture. Culture is one of the most complex terms in the English language (Williams 1981; Hall 1997a: 2). Storey (2003: 3) defines culture as 'the practices and processes of making shared meanings.' Tomlinson offers 'the context within which people give meanings to their actions and experiences and make sense of their lives' (quoted in Weldes 2003: 6). Thus, culture is about texts and practices whose primary purpose is meaning-making. As Weber (2001b: 134) notes, '[c]ulture is political, and politics is cultural', such that 'culture' covers official articulations of US identity such as those found in the speeches of US presidents but, in its more specific sense, culture denotes a sphere of discourse that is conventionally accepted as separate from, say, 'economic,' 'medical,' 'legal' or 'political' discourse(s), and which refers to practices and artefacts in, for example, art, literature, dance, media and music.

More specifically still, a distinction is often drawn between 'high' or 'elite' culture and 'popular,' 'low' or 'mass' culture – for example, the differences between poetry (high culture) and gangsta rap (popular culture). While often used interchangeably, these terms – popular, low, mass – are not entirely synonymous. The first indicates cultural artefacts' broad appeal, that they are liked by many people. The second connotes the relative esteem in which such artefacts are held (often by cultural elites) – specifically, their status as 'inferior kinds of work' (Williams in Storey 2001:

5). The third resonates with both of these meanings, as well as with an undertone that the primary purpose of 'popular' culture is to be commercially profitable (Fiske 1989), that is, 'work deliberately setting out to win favour' with many people (Williams in Storey 2001: 5).[2]

I use the term 'popular culture' to refer primarily to the first of these conceptions, as that which is liked by a lot of people (popular reception), as well as the third meaning (intended by makers to be popular). The attraction of conceptualising 'popular' via the first definition is that ostensibly 'high' or 'elite' cultural artefacts can also be considered as popular: 'art-house' cinema as well as blockbusters; the poster reprints of Van Gogh and Rothko that adorn students' walls; the 'Three Tenors', who are popular amongst segments of the British public that would not consider themselves 'opera-goers'. Further, this formulation does not rely on 'popular' being defined as an inferior, residual category encompassing everything that is not 'highbrow' culture. However, I do not offer a complex or quantitative definition, since any such definition would inevitably be fraught with problems – it will never be possible to determine 'once and for all' how many copies a novel must sell, or how many people must buy a DVD in order for the artefact to be 'truly' popular. It is also difficult to make mass appeal the only criterion by which popular culture can be judged, since many TV shows are not watched by tens of millions of viewers, but most people consider TV to be 'by definition' a popular cultural medium (Storey 2003: 9).

Popular culture is 'an arena of struggle and negotiation between the interests of dominant groups and the interests of subordinate groups' (Storey 2003: 4) and, as such, one of the spheres within which hegemonic discourses are most commonly and successfully reproduced. Shapiro has argued that 'with the exception of some resistant forms, music, theatre, TV weather forecasts, and even cereal box scripts tend to endorse prevailing power structures by helping to reproduce the beliefs and allegiances necessary for their uncontested functioning' (quoted in Weldes 2003: 6). While this may be true to a certain extent, popular cultural texts also possess the

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[2] One could also add to these three ways of conceptualising popular culture, cultural texts and practices specifically produced by and engaged in 'by' the people. However, such a definition still relies on an implicit binary between elite (or 'fake') culture produced for the masses and 'authentic' culture (often understood as produced by the working class) (Storey 2001: 5).

potential for resistance to hegemonic cultural forces, through the aforementioned impossibility of permanently fixing meaning. It is important to analyse the meanings contained within popular culture because '[w]hether a particular popular cultural text supports or undermines existing relations of power, or both at once, examining such texts helps us to highlight the workings of power' (Weldes 2003: 7).

Texts and Intertextuality

Derrida's claim that '*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*' (1997: 158)[3] can be seen as synonymous with Laclau and Mouffe's articulation of the field of discursivity/discursive realm. Whether one uses discursivity or textuality as the overarching concept is a matter of theoretical heritage and personal preference, and I view them as broadly interchangeable. The metaphor of textuality is a particularly fruitful one for emphasising the materiality of discursive structures and constructions, because of its etymological affiliation with *tissue*, *textile* and *texture*. These associations draw attention to the importance of visual and other non-linguistic articulations that the metaphor of discursivity may obscure.

The discursive realm can be imagined as the social fabric, a web or mesh interwoven and intertwined with different discursive threads like lace, or as a patchwork of textual meanings that require stitching together (articulation). Analysis, then, involves unravelling (deconstructing/dis-articulating) these discourses and meanings while remaining aware that 'everything is to be disentangled, nothing *deciphered*; the structure can be followed, "run" (like the thread of a stocking) at every point and at every level, but there is nothing underneath' (Barthes 1977: 147, emphasis added). There is no final truth, no external reality that can be appealed to as neutral arbiter between competing claims; there are only particular unravellings of discursive articulations and the relative persuasiveness of these unravellings.

That said, some conceptual precision is required in elaborating a theoretical framework (while at the same time remaining aware that any such precision functions to limit as well as to enhance critical purchase). For the purposes of this

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[3] 'there is no outside-the-text'.

analysis, *discourse* functions as the dominant or umbrella term for systems of meaning-production, while *text* is used more narrowly to refer to the artefacts (films, books), sites (bodies, institutions) and moments (events) in and through which meanings are articulated. I use the term *intertextuality* rather than interdiscursivity because intertextuality specifically highlights the ways in which discourses intersect *within* texts (the aim of this project), and because it is a term whose analytical implications are more readily apprehended (although in principle the terms evoke the same phenomenon/a).

Roland Barthes makes a distinction between the 'work' and the 'text,' where the work is the artefact 'itself' (a video-tape, a painting, a book) and the text is the meanings which are understood by the reader: 'the work can be held in the hand, the text is held in language, only exists in the movement of a discourse... the Text is experienced only in an *activity of production*' (Barthes 1977: 157, original emphasis). This notion of text requires a shift from the importance of the author to the paramountcy of the reader as the producer of meaning, since 'the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author' (148). Once the author is removed from the pedestal of final author-ity over the meanings contained within the text, 'the claim to decipher a text becomes quite futile' (147). A text, therefore, is not a source from which meaning issues, but a site in which meaning is produced, reproduced, contested and transformed. It is in this sense that one can talk about a multiplicity of reader-written texts 'in' any one work – indeed, there is a potentially infinite number of Barthesian 'writerly' texts thus understood:

> Interpretation is shaped by a complex of relations between the text, the reader, reading, writing, printing, publishing and history: the history that is inscribed in the language, of the text and in the history that is carried in the reader's reading. Such a history has been given a name: intertextuality. (Orr 2003: 10)

The term 'intertextuality' was coined by Julia Kristeva (1986: 37, 39) in her critique of Bakhtin. It is now used in a variety of ways to connote related but subtly different concepts (Allen 2000). In her 'Directory of Alternative Terms for "Intertext",

"Intertextuality"', Mary Orr lists over 1200 words (2003: 238-46).[4] For analytical purposes, intertextuality can be conceptualised as operating at three levels: micro-, meso- and macro-. At the micro-level, the intertextuality of specific words, phrases and concepts can be thought of as polysemy or heteroglossia (Bakhtin 2006: 489, 491 and *passim*), the multi-faceted associations that words take on in different contexts, the surplus and deferral of meaning that Ashley calls the 'infinite play of practice' (in Milliken 1999: 230). Therefore, because words are laden with prior meanings for the reader, 'even "brand-new" texts... "come before us as the always-already-read"' (Jameson quoted in Waller 1990: 119).

The meso-level refers to citational or referential practices (understood more broadly than in the strict sense of citations in academic practice):

> a delicate allusion to a work unknown to the reader, which therefore goes unnoticed, will have a dormant existence in that reading. On the other hand, the reader's experience of some practice or theory unknown to the author may lead to a fresh interpretation. (Still and Worton 1990: 2)

Quentin Tarantino's films *Kill Bill* (volumes I and II), for example, reference more than one hundred other films and cultural texts, through the soundtrack, dialogue, costumes, mise-en-scène (framing of shots) and montage (editing). Intertextuality functions more and less implicitly and explicitly, and more and less intentionally and unintentionally on the part of the author, such that 'every text forms a "mosaic of citations," a palimpsest of traces' (Stam *et al.* 1992: 204). Crucially for my purposes, *every* text is an intertext; every text is 'a new tissue of recycled citations' (Barthes quoted in Orr 2003: 33).

The macro-level refers to the ways in which similar discursive structures and formations can be identified within two seemingly discrete discourses, such as the gendered representations of war found in US presidential speeches and in popular films. The uncritical assumption that 'of course' the discourses of foreign policy elites and of popular war films are very different things – based on distinctions between fact/fiction, elite/popular – is the '"moment of extreme ideological closure...

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[4] The term itself is thus a very good example of intertextuality.

common sense, the regime of the "taken for granted"' (Hall 1985: 105). Ostensibly, these discourses operate in different ways. However, their micro- (conceptual) intertextuality (both policy and popular cultural discourses of world politics invoke concepts such as 'war,' 'soldiering,' 'the state,' and 'the international,' for example) make them intertextually readable.

These three levels or types of intertextuality – micro-/conceptual, meso-/citational, and the broader macro-/discursive – cannot be distinguished in a rigid sense, but rather demonstrate how logics of intertextuality function in a variety of ways. The 'identification of an intertext is an act of interpretation. The intertext is not a real and causative source but a theoretical construct formed by and serving the purposes of a reading' (Frow 1990: 46). The final point to make about intertextuality is that both fixes meaning and opens up fixed meanings to new interpretations. The intertextuality (structural congruence) of policy and cultural discourses is often obscured, reinforcing the 'common sense' that they are not linked and therefore also reinforcing the links themselves. However, the infinite play of practice implies that meaning can never be final or contained, and thus offers analytical space for re-articulating these discourses anew.[5]

I use *representation* to denote an intra- or sub-textual concept that refers to discursive articulations *within* text(s). To represent means 'to symbolize, stand for' (*Shorter OED* quoted in Hall 1997b: 16); a representation is a 'likeness, picture, copy, model' (Stam *et al.* 1992: 184).[6] Representations are the articulatory 'building blocks' of texts. Representations might be of an individual (e.g., a soldier), concept (e.g., a wedding), or structure (e.g., racism). In a film, representations are not merely static but are constituted in the context of a *narrative* – for example, what happens to an individual in a story over time, or in the relationship between two characters. A narrative is a series of representations that 'arrests ambiguity and controls the proliferation of meaning by imposing a standard and standpoint of interpretation

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[5] Torfing (1999) refers to discursive analysis as discourse theoretic analysis in order to highlight that the activity of empirical analysis cannot be disarticulated from theorising.
[6] 'Representation' also means the discursive *practice*, the process of representing. The notion of 'representation as a practice reminds us that representation only takes place when interpretative labour is being performed' (Rowley and Weldes 2008: 192).

that is taken to be fixed and independent of the time it represents' (Ashley 1989: 263). To analyse a text's representations is therefore to deconstruct the ways in which representations are articulated as narrative elements within the text.

Gender

I am particularly interested in the ways in which gender is represented/how representations are gendered. Feminists[7] and poststructuralists have drawn on Derrida (1978, 1997), to expose the ways in which so many representations and discourses in Western thought are based on (gendered) binary structures.[8] Binary structures work to define everything as either 'A' or 'not-A', allowing only these two, rather than a range of possibilities ('A', 'B', 'C'...) These binaries include, but are by no means limited to, culture/nature, reason/ emotion, head/heart, mind/body, rational/ irrational, active/passive, science/art, day/night, sun/moon, public/private, international/domestic, war/peace, male/female, man/woman, masculine/feminine, hard/soft, tough/tender, science/art, objective/subjective, universal/particular and self/other (see Hooper 2001: 43; Cixous 1980; Gregory 1989: xv-xvi; Ashley 1989: 261).

These terms are defined oppositionally and, crucially, in such a way that the first term is privileged as universal/normal/ideal, while the second term is devalued: 'Not merely differentiated and set in opposition to each other, the terms are also differently weighted, one having more power than the other' (Gregory 1989: xv). Specifically, characteristics associated with masculinity – the first term of each pair – are valued and valorised, while those associated with femininity are marginalised. The intertextuality of language and the infinite play of practice also mean that the discursive deployments of these binaries – Barthes' 'recycled citations' – carry with them traces of other binaries. Thus, insofar as the residual traces of male/female,

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[7] While I consider myself to be a feminist, and this thesis to be a poststructural feminist project, I understand feminism in the loosest possible sense, as providing the means to think gender differently.

[8] Other ways in which feminists and poststructuralists have theorised gender is through the deployment of psychoanalytic frameworks, particularly inspired by Jacques Lacan's critique of Freudian psychoanalysis. These approaches have been particularly influential in the field of film studies, and are discussed in more detail in the section entitled 'Visual Analytical Strategies', below.

man/woman, masculine/feminine, and heterosexual/homosexual are present in all of the other binaries (e.g., public/private, domestic/international, war/peace), *all* of the binaries above are themselves always-already gendered and are implicated in the (re)production of gender even (perhaps especially) where this discursive labour is not immediately apparent.

In this sense then, gender is not (only) about bodies, but (also) about discursive structures. The interpellation of individuals into gendered subject positions is important, but is not the only way in which gender functions discursively: institutions and policies can be 'gendered,' in that they are discursively articulated through – and themselves articulate other – gendered concepts. The binaries above are deployed to limit the potentially infinite fluidity of meaning, of identity and, in this case, of gendered identities. These identities cannot be contained in binaries, however, and constantly threaten to break out, indicating the precariousness of these representations and their constant need to be iterated. Representations inevitably change over time, and can be seen more clearly when specific constellations of deployed binaries are contrasted with other discursive formations.

Binaries can be deployed in a variety of ways and with very different effects. As Charlotte Hooper notes,

> Soldiering is characterized as a manly activity requiring the "masculine" traits of physical strength, action, toughness, capacity for violence, and, for officers resolve, technical know-how, and logical or strategic thinking. ... But traditionally the "feminine" qualities of total obedience and submission to authority, the attention to dress detail, and the endless repetition of mundane tasks that enlisted men as opposed to officers are expected to perform are downplayed or interpreted as nongendered at least to the outside world... To highlight such aspects of soldiering in the lower ranks would be to some degree to "feminize" this activity, reduce its contribution to the reproduction of masculine identities, and simultaneously signal a reduction in its overall status. It is not the actions themselves but the gendered interpretations placed on them that are crucial in determining which activities count as masculine and valued and which count as feminine and devalued. (2001: 47-8)

In attempting to theorise 'woman' (or 'man'), one finds diversity; in theorising 'femininity' (or 'masculinity'), one finds multiplicity (e.g., multiple models of

masculinity) and instability (the instability of those characteristics valorised and feminised at any one time); in theorising the relationship(s) between femininity and masculinity, one finds complexity. It is necessary to move beyond gendered (and sexed) dichotomies as the final word, towards an illumination of the historically contingent and dynamic hierarchies of gender that have been discursively constituted. This involves complexifying our understanding of the ways in which discursive categories[9] intersect, and investigating these gendered articulations and interpellated and performed subject-positions in their textual locations, and as they are iterated over time.

Thus far, I have discussed the theoretical framework that underpins this study: the inescapability of discourse and discursive practices, and the ways in which these practices construct meaning; the political (power-laden) nature of these practices; and the gendered nature of textual representations. I now discuss the concepts, tools and strategies to be deployed in the empirical analysis. The methodology in this thesis is underpinned by a theoretical commitment to discourse, where discourse is understood more broadly than 'just' language, to include all systems of signification, whether linguistic or not. However, while discursive analytical strategies deployed in the discipline of IR are useful for interrogating written texts, such as policy documents and speeches, approaches developed to analyse written texts do not offer the array of methodological concepts required for analysing visual cultural artefacts. I therefore draw upon both discursive and visual analytical strategies.

Discursive Analytical Strategies

Milliken (1999) outlines three strands of discursive analytical research in IR: first, studying discourses as systems of signification, within which she discusses two types of analysis: predicate analysis and metaphor analysis. Second, studying discourse-productivity, of which there are three main types (foreign policy, IR theory and international diplomacy/organisation studies), which can examine the construction of common sense or policy practices. Third, the play of practice, connected with four

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[9] Categories of gender, sexuality, race, class, ethnicity, religion, (dis)ability, age – what Judith Butler calls the 'embarrassed "etc"' (1990: 143).

analytical methods: deconstructive; juxtapositional; a focus on subjugated knowledges (an extension of the juxtapositional method); and genealogical. An intertextual reading necessarily examines all three strands, deploying a variety of methods and concepts, which are not radically distinguishable in empirical analysis. I am interested in both the predicates and the metaphors articulated in the speeches and film dialogue; the discourses are being interrogated for their common-sense representations of US identity; and I examine the play of practice through deconstructive and juxtapositional methods. This involves reading the texts separately (chapters 3-6), followed by an intertextual reading that juxtaposes the two sets of texts (chapter 7).

'A discourse provides... concepts, categories, metaphors, models, and analogies by which meanings are created' (Doty 1993: 302). Doty's 'Discursive Practices Approach' (DPA) is a form of predicate analysis which examines specific types or modes of discursive articulation and interpellation. Doty identifies three 'textual mechanisms': *predication* 'involves the linking of certain qualities to particular subjects through the use of predicates and the adverbs and adjectives that modify them... [a] predicate affirms a quality, attribute, or property of a person or thing' (1993: 306). Whenever a subject or object is articulated, it is done so through language that is also laden with other values – e.g., 'the US is a strong nation'.

Presupposition 'creates background knowledge and in doing so constructs a particular kind of world in which certain things are recognized as true' (Doty 1993: 306). To look for presupposition in a text means to interrogate those assumptions that are taken for granted. For example, when it is argued that 'communist North Vietnam invaded South Vietnam,' it is presupposed that these entities were sovereign states; the status of the Vietnamese territory as only temporarily and provisionally partitioned along the seventeenth parallel in 1954 is either ignored or disavowed. I read the presidential speeches for their gendered predicates and presuppositions of not only the US state and society but also the military, soldiers and veterans, men and women civilians, as well as of the Vietnamese.

In addition to exposing predicates and presuppositions, I also deconstruct metaphors used in the speeches, such as the heliotrope (the metaphor of light) (Shapiro 1985-6: 194). Words associated with the heliotrope included 'enlighten,' 'illuminate,' 'bright,' and 'idea'. Likewise, expressions such as 'being wedded to,' 'sister organisations,' 'mother tongue' or 'Fatherland' are examples of the types of gendered phrases and relationships for which I will read the texts (although I expect the metaphorical associations to be much less explicitly gendered, and therefore more complex in function, than these terms).

Deploying the metaphors of 'reading' and 'discursive' analysis, thereby prioritising the linguistic over the visual, has its own conceptual and methodological ramifications. While these concepts can be applied to films and other visual artefacts, particularly where there is spoken dialogue or written text, some additional/different concepts are required in order to fully operationalise a reading of the tropes and representations at work in visual texts. I devote more space to visual analytical concepts and strategies here because these are likely to be less familiar to IR scholars than are discursive analytical concepts.

Visual Analytical Strategies

It is very difficult to describe *how* one reads a film. At the most basic level it can be described thus: 'I watch the film, note down what occurs to me, what I consider to be important, and then I write about it'. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why there is so much written about film theory, as well as a substantial body of research analysing films, but so very little written about how to actually *do* the analysis. Images must be read, but this does not necessarily happen consciously (Monaco 1981: 122). As Sturken and Cartwright argue,

> [w]e use many tools to interpret images and create meanings with them, and we often use these tools of looking automatically, without giving them much thought.... [filmic c]onventions are like road signs; we must learn their *codes* for them to make sense; the codes we learn become second nature. Just as we recognize the meaning of most road symbols almost immediately, we read, or *decode*, more complex images almost instantly, giving little thought to our process of decoding. (2001: 25, original emphasis)

This difficulty is compounded by the fact that 'the semiotician is constantly forced back into language to speak of the semiotics of any non-linguistic cultural object' (Stam *et al.* 1992: 3).

Semiotics is the analysis of signs, encompassing a variety of theoretical perspectives. The conceptual clarity and specificity that structuralist film semiotics attempts to provide comes at considerable theoretical cost, in the form of the foundationalist assumptions that underpin such analyses. I do not therefore employ the vast array of specific terms (such as Christian Metz's eight 'syntagmatic types') that are available in the semiotic lexicon of cinema (see Stam *et al.* 1992: 28-118). Instead, I 'poststructuralise' some of the concepts discussed by Monaco and by Stam *et al.*

Within a film, each frame comprises 'a potentially infinite amount of visual information, as does the soundtrack that accompanies it' (Monaco 1981: 129). The totality of elements in a film that are (or can be) 'read' – encompassing the script, camera angles, lighting, editing, music, sound effects, costumes, props, extra-diegetic information, and more – are difficult to summarise concisely, all the more so because they vary from film to film and from analyst to analyst. The amount of information has been further expanded by DVDs, which provide 'extras' such as commentaries by actors, directors, producers and writers, deleted scenes and 'making of' featurettes and documentaries.[10] I focus here on those methods that cannot be appropriated from discursive analysis (such as the dialogue, for example, which can be analysed using the same concepts and techniques). I begin with the two meta-concepts in film analysis: mise-en-scène and montage.

Mise-en-scène refers to the framing of shots, while montage refers to the process of editing or cutting the film together (the sequence of shots). Within mise-en-scène and montage there are three ways of thinking about the representations. The first is

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[10] I quote frequently from the DVD commentaries for *The Deer Hunter* (DVD commentary 2003) and *Forrest Gump* (DVD commentary 2001) (there is no commentary on the *Rambo II* DVD). Although authors' statements about their intended meanings in the films are by no means the final word on how the narratives and representations can be interpreted, they provide an interesting source of other possible readings of the films, which I juxtapose against my own readings. Since it is often impossible to tell who is speaking in a group-based DVD commentary, these are cited throughout the three film chapters simply as (DVD commentary).

to analyse what is there: how the film is shot (the diegesis, or diegetic denotation). The second is to compare the shots selected from the range of possible shots that could have been selected but were not (paradigmatic connotation). 'We know (even if we don't remind ourselves of it consciously) that a filmmaker has made specific choices' (Monaco 1981: 131). The third is specific to montage, and refers to the shot placed in the context of both preceding and succeeding shots – to think about the film not as a series of discrete units but as a whole – the relation of shots to (potentially) all of the other shots in the film. In addition to these three ways of thinking about the film, we can add 'punctuation' (how shots are stitched together), the most common being the unmarked cut. Other examples include the dissolve, wipe, wave, and fade. Films 'construct meaning not only through visual images but also through film's ability to control the dimensions of time and space, through choice of shots, framing, editing and narrative space' (Thornham 1999a: 54).

Monaco also considers various types of representational device: icon, index, symbol, metonymy, and synecdoche (1981: 133-40). The first three are derived from Charles Pierce, and are conceptualised as mainly denotative, while the last two are broadly connotative. In practice, these categories overlap and I do not draw such fine distinctions between the particular representational devices when writing about the films, but it is useful to review them here, if only to demonstrate the validity of Sturken and Cartwright's comment that decoding these representations is second nature, and that we are often unaware of the complexity of the signifiers we decode as readers of films.

An *icon* is a signifier that represents the signified through its similarity or likeness. Most representational devices in films appear to be this 'straight-forward': when one sees an image of a car being driven down a street, it represents a car being driven down a street. Monaco terms this the 'short-circuit sign', characteristic of cinema (1981: 133). Photographs and portraits are other examples of icons. *Indices* differ from icons in that their ability to represent a signified is linked by what Monaco calls an 'inherent relationship' (133): sweating can be an index of nervousness or heat; yawning can be an index of tiredness or boredom. *Symbols*, such as words and numbers, are the most arbitrary signifiers, being based on historical convention

(Stam *et al.* 1992: 5). *Metonymy* – literally "substitute naming" – is the term given to an idea that is invoked through an associated detail (Monaco 1981: 135), such as the term 'Bobbie' for British policemen, from Robert Peel, the founder of the British police force. *Synecdoche* refers to the use of a 'part' to stand in for a 'whole', and vice versa. These concepts function at different levels: for example, In World War II films, platoons are often composed of a variety of 'hyphenated-American' ethnicities, and each character stands as a representative of that sub-national cultural group.

Psychoanalytic approaches are also deployed in film studies (see, e.g., Mulvey 2000; Thornham 1999b, parts II and V; Stam *et al.* 1992, part IV; Creed 1993, 2000). Psychoanalytic (and to a lesser extent feminist psychoanalytic) film theory presents a somewhat reductionist and determinist view of the construction of gender, essentialising both maleness and femaleness and reifying the nuclear family. The Lacanian account of subject-formation is predicated upon ahistorical and universal foundationalist assumptions about how babies and children develop sexually, such that it seems ill-equipped to account for, for example, how children of single parents become interpellated as gendered and sexual beings, or the construction of gay and lesbian subjectivities. Positing male/female as *the* category of difference makes it difficult to theorise any multiplicity of gendered subject-positions, and elides race, class and other elements of interpellated subjectivities.

That said, some useful concepts have been developed within this approach, and these are integrated and deployed in specific instances in the empirical analysis. Psychoanalytic concepts provide a way of thinking about the gendered logics operating in cultural representations that moves beyond the mere analysis of men and women as gendered bodies. In particular, feminist psychoanalytic approaches force us to remain aware of the gendered nature of the technologies and practices at work – the cinematic apparatus itself – as opposed to remaining trapped at the intra-diegetic level of analysis.

The idea that film resembles fantasy[11] is a particularly useful place to start. Creed uses the term to mean 'the Freudian sense in which the subject is represented as a protagonist engaged in the activity of wish fulfilment' (1993: 6). When we watch films, we suspend reality – we know that what is on the screen is not 'real,' but we consume as though it were. In her influential article, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', Laura Mulvey (2000 [1975]) presents a psychoanalytic feminist analysis of the processes involved in watching a film, in which she argues that there are three gazes at work in cinema (46-7): the camera at the actors and events being recorded; the film audience at the product shown on the screen; and the intra-diegetic characters at each other (see also Stam *et al.* 1992: 149-58; 175).[12] In order to make films appear obvious and feel true, '[t]he conventions of narrative film must deny the first two and subordinate them to the third' (Mulvey: 2000: 47). The camera lens establishes the spectator as the centre of the world, giving a (masculine) sense of mastery, omnipotence, omnipresence and coherence (Neale 1983: 5). For example, the shot/reverse shot, often used to portray two characters in conversation through both 'over the shoulder' points of view, creates the illusion of transparency and omniscience for the audience.[13]

The source of pleasure in cinematic spectatorship (scopophilia) comes from the unconscious identification with the camera's 'eye' through the imagery projected onto the screen, as well as from the narcissistic identification of the spectator with characters in the diegesis. Often, these separate gazes appear unified, sutured together, as the camera shows the spectator the point of view (POV) of the male

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[11] Sometimes spelled *phantasy*, in order to distinguish it from 'the connotations of whimsy' (Creed 1993: 6).

[12] In contrast, Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins (1993, ch.7) identify seven gazes at work in the *National Geographic* photographs they analyse, although most of these relate specifically to their analysis of magazines as texts.

[13] These processes can be deliberately subverted within a film, for example in *Fight Club*, where the audience is misled about the nature of the events that have occurred in the diegesis, and is not shown the 'real truth' of what happened until the very end of the film (prior to the ending, in which it is revealed that the protagonist suffers from a multiple personality disorder, the audience is led to believe that the character of Tyler Durden exists in 'real life', as opposed to his only existing in the protagonist's mind). However, this subversion also helps to reinforce these processes, by acknowledging and relying upon the ways in which they typically function. Ultimately at the end of *Fight Club* (1999), the sense of omniscience is restored when the 'truth' is revealed. The same is true of *Memento* (2000) and *The Machinist* (2004).

protagonist (Mulvey 2000: 41, 47).[14] POV refers to the literal process of seeing what the character sees (as a 'bird's eye' view literally shows the world from a point in the sky), but there is also the broader notion of 'point of view' metaphorically understood – the lingering shots of the protagonist that tell us their emotional reactions to information, for example. POV shots function to invest the spectator in specific characters, to empathise with some and not others. Mulvey notes that the active possessor of the gaze is a masculine subject-position, vis-à-vis the passive, feminised, 'looked-at' object, and that mainstream, patriarchal narrative cinema involves positioning 'woman as image, man as bearer of the look' (39). She goes on to theorise the gendered and eroticised dynamics of voyeurism, narcissistic scopophilia, sadism and fetishisation at work in (the process of watching) films.

Scopophilia, the pleasure of looking, can be a type of voyeurism, in which the bearer of the gaze (the spectator or a character in a film) looks at another, who is coded as sexualised object. Another, more complicated, process involves a narcissistic identification with characters on the screen, and with their actions. Mulvey associates *the male spectator looking at men* on screen with only this former type of gaze: 'A male movie star's glamorous characteristics are thus not those of the erotic object of his gaze, but those of the more perfect, more complete, more powerful ideal ego' (2000: 41). However, as John Ellis has proposed, processes of identification are never as straightforward as male audiences identifying with male characters and women identifying with female characters (in Neale 1983: 4). Neale notes that a whole 'series of identifications are involved... each shifting and mobile' (5). At the same time, it is certainly the case that 'there is constant work to channel and regulate identification in relation to sexual division, in relation to the [existing] orders of gender, sexuality and social identity' (5).[15]

Mulvey's article focuses mainly on voyeurism rather than identification, on the function of woman as connoting 'to-be-looked-at-ness' (2000: 40). Since woman is

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[14] Identification is particularly evident where there is a narration soundtrack in the first person but this is by no means the only way in which processes of identification function.
[15] This argument is further complexified by the consideration of homosexual, bisexual and other gendered and sexualised identities, both as these appear on screen and in the sense of the 'real' viewer (as opposed to the theoretically-posited masculine heterosexual 'spectator').

essentially a marker of (sexual) difference (42), however, looking at women is not purely pleasurable voyeurism, since woman carries with her the implicit threat of castration. To overcome or disavow this anxiety, the 'male unconscious has two avenues of escape' (42). One is 'investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery', which carries sadistic associations of guilt, control and subjugation, leading to devaluation, punishment or redemption of the female figure (42-3). Mulvey associates this sadism with narrative, since '[s]adism demands a story' (43). The other is 'fetishistic scopophilia [which] builds up the physical beauty of the object, transforming it into something satisfying in itself' (42) and is associated with spectacle. Ellis defines the difference between the voyeuristic and the fetishistic gaze thus: 'The voyeuristic look is curious, inquiring, demanding to know. The fetishistic gaze is captivated by what it sees, does not wish to inquire further... The fetishistic look has much to do with display and the spectacular' (Ellis in Neale 1983: 13).

Steve Neale opens up Mulvey's framework in order to explore its implications for visual representations of men in films and for the male spectator (1983: 4). He observes that, while processes of narcissistic identification may be at work between the male spectator and the male character on screen, the omnipotence and perfection of the male at which the gaze is directed may also make these images 'a source of... feelings of castration, inasmuch as that ideal is something to which the subject is never adequate' (7). In short, 'male heroes can at times be marked as the object of an erotic gaze' (8), since the gaze carries with it inescapably eroticised dynamics, although these must be constantly repressed and denied. These dynamics threaten symbolic emasculation and/or homosexualisation of the spectator-position (and thus of the male spectator). In this way, 'male homosexuality is constantly present as an undercurrent, as a potentially troubling aspect of many films and genres, but one that is dealt with obliquely, symptomatically, and that has to be repressed' (15).

Having discussed the discursive and visual analytical methods (both semiotic and psychoanalytic) deployed in this thesis, I now briefly discuss the practicalities of conducting the analysis, as well as reflecting explicitly on how my own subject-position affects the research design, methods, analysis and conclusions. In the spirit

of 'grounded theory', in which theorising/abstraction occurs in tandem with detailed empirical study (Glaser and Strauss 1967), I return to the discussion of theorising intertextuality in the conclusion (chapter 8).

Reading the Speeches and Films Intertextually

As a minimum, analysing a text properly involves reading it several times, perhaps ten times (or more), sometimes making a lot of notes, sometimes hardly any (letting the text 'wash over you'), focusing upon disarticulating different elements each time. Sometimes it is fruitful to read a text twice, or read different texts 'back-to-back', in quick succession. It can also be productive to leave each text alone for a while and come back to it having done more (and different) research, and/or having watched/read other films and speeches (both those analysed in this thesis and those extraneous to it), in order to open up new intertextual horizons for exploration.

To begin with, the texts were read independently. The film readings were usually done thematically –one viewing for the narrative/dialogue, one viewing for mise-en-scène, one for montage, one for imagery (including props, costumes and other signifying mechanisms), and one for the soundtrack, both musical and other sound effects. I also read (both types of) texts thematically by concept – one reading examining gendered/sexualised articulations and interpellations, one for race, one for articulations of the international/domestic divide, and so on. It is, of course, impossible to segregate radically these 'types' of reading from one another, in that, inevitably, when one is reading for, say, gendered articulations one notices how they are also racialised and vice versa; or, in a film, when one may be deliberately listening for gendered interpellations in the dialogue and happens to read the visual image as linked to what is being said (such as a character's clothing, for example).

Conducting multiple readings of a film or speech can lead to a scene, character or motif, or even the textual narrative 'as a whole', being understood as carrying two (or more) different, and perhaps incommensurable, interpretations. For example, a film can be read as supporting women's liberation while at the same time containing problematic depictions of gender. In this sense, deconstruction involves not only

destabilising the meanings in the text once, but as many times as possible. In order to further expand my interpretations of (aspects of) each text, after watching the films a number of times, I engaged critically with the existing academic literature on each film, as well as the large volume of literature on presidential rhetoric, to identify interpretations that may diverge from my own readings. I have integrated these arguments into the analysis presented here.

Having conducted the individual analyses of the speeches and films, I re-read both the texts, and my own readings of these, looking for inter-textual articulations at the micro-, meso- and macro-levels. At the meso-level, this involved reading the films together with their source-material: the novel *Forrest Gump* (Groom 1994 [1986]) and the novel (Morrell 1973) and film of *First Blood* (1982), as well as reading texts to which *The Deer Hunter* alludes (specifically, Cooper's [1962 (1841)] *Deerslayer*). I also read reviews of the films. These readings form the 'relevant context' sections at the beginning of chapters 4, 5 and 6. In terms of the speeches, I have noted in chapter 3 some of the specific quotes Presidents have used (e.g., Carter's invocation of the words of the Prophet Micah).

At the micro-level, the intertextual analysis involved looking at the ways in which certain concepts that appeared in multiple texts – e.g., 'Vietnam', 'woman', 'nature' – were coded and represented (using 'the infinite play of practice' of these terms to demonstrate the attempted fixing of meaning). Finally, I brought these readings together in a macro-level analysis, in which I read the texts for similar discursive presuppositions about, for example, the causes of US defeat, the country's responsibility to veterans, and the deployment of US American myths. The micro- and macro-level readings form the bulk of the analysis presented in chapter 7. In addition to looking for similarities, I also deliberately juxtaposed divergent representations against each other, over time and across the two discursive contexts.

Reflexivity

Popular films must be 'readable' from a huge variety of subject positions in order to make sense to tens of millions of people (white, black, Hispanic, European, Asian,

American, male, female, straight, gay, butch, femme, rich, poor, immigrant... Judith Butler's 'embarrassed "etc"' again). It is impossible to access even a fraction of these potential readings. The impossibility of being able to verify or 'prove' that certain readings exist 'objectively' within the text leads some people to argue that this sort of research is doomed to relativism and even nihilism. However, as Kristeva argues, 'the paradoxical nature of the semiotic enterprise does not lead to paralysis but to renewed creativity, since the semiotician caught in this paradox is forced always to analyse her own discursive position' (1986: 24). Being critical demands that we examine and reflect upon our own motivations as people/researchers. It is in this spirit that I turn now to analysing my discursive position, in order expose more carefully the 'biases' and presuppositions I myself may hold.

Karen Armstrong, a former nun who became an academic later in life, argues that 'the attitudes that you learn at your desk spill over into your everyday existence' (2004: 332). This is also true in reverse: who we are in our 'everyday existence,' the various discursive positions into and through which we interpellate ourselves, shape the attitudes we bring to our desks and to our research. There is no clear division between who we are as researchers and who we are as people. My personal experiences, my values and my beliefs about the world (which are not static) are necessarily reflected in the ontological, epistemological and methodological claims I make in my 'professional' academic work. The research question, data selection, research design, methods, analysis and conclusions are the particular and contextual product of the multiplicity of discourses within which 'I, the author' am situated as a temporary nodal point. I do not come to the analysis as a blank slate waiting for the data to reveal its meaning to me; rather, I am already inscribed with my own (and others') prior readings of the texts. The thoughts I have had, the meanings I have made, the films and books that I have read (and those I have not read) are a unique intertextual combination. This thesis – the product of that intertextual combination – will also be further intertextualised by readers' interpretations and through future iterations of current meanings.

The temporary nodal point in which I am situated includes the interpellations young, woman, masculine, feminine, feminist, poststructural, middle-class, straight(ish),

student, multi-lingual, Southern English, Badisch, German, European, white, (lapsed) Roman Catholic, cosmopolitan world citizen... there are many others that I could add to this list. However, the list of intersections by itself is not of much use. These are always performed in conjunction with one another in myriad different discursive formations. In this research project I am particularly conscious of (and attentive to) my status as a female junior academic, as a feminist and as a poststructuralist. Indeed, I am performatively constituting these identities through my doctoral thesis.

Hooper (2001: 9-10) reminds us of some of the ethical and political issues that arise as a result of our subjectivities whenever we are conducting research. Primarily, being an academic is a position of power, author-ity and privilege. In choosing to focus on hegemonic cultural artefacts – popular war films and prominent presidential speeches – I in some ways reinforce the 'naturalness' of studying the powerful and important, and reproduce these *as* powerful and important, ignoring and thereby further marginalising those inhabiting the 'margins, silences and bottom rungs' of world politics (Enloe 1996). In choosing to focus on representations of war, I have also played a part in reinforcing the notion that war is central to the discipline of IR.

I have taken the decision to conduct this particular research because I feel that I am best placed to study these sites and practices. I have been familiar with and immersed in both discourses for at least ten years (longer in the case of the films), thus I am writing about something of which I am a part, rather than attempting to speak for Others. I have chosen to analyse gender because of my feminist commitments (although not all feminists would recognise my work as such), and because the gendered dimensions of these two discourses have profoundly affected my life and my work. Moreover, I believe that studying hegemonic discourses in this way is to problematise their hegemonic status and to offer new ways of thinking about accepted knowledge.

However, there is always the risk of being absorbed or co-opted by the discourses one studies. While I wish to dismantle these discourses and rearticulate them differently, I must conform to certain basic academic norms and conventions, such as masculinist modes of speaking and writing, in order to pass the PhD and be taken

seriously as an academic. Although I may at times be marginalised within academia because of the perceived lack of policy-relevance of my work (which is sometimes referred to as frivolous), I *enjoy* writing in the accepted academic 'tone', using the kind of vocabulary that my students call jargon, and constructing myself as part of a knowledgeable elite community, as an 'expert' (see Parpart 1995). The rhetorical styles and strategies that I employ reproduce the very same hegemonic codes that I am attempting to deconstruct (see Cohn 1987). Whether one argues that they are deployed strategically or even that these codes are being subverted in some crucial way, Hooper reminds us that there is no innocent position (2001: 10).

In this chapter I have outlined the poststructural ontology and epistemology that underpins this research project, as well as the specific discursive and visual analytical concepts and strategies that are deployed in the analysis. This exposition has unpacked the claims made in chapter 1, namely that without such a radical constructivist approach to the study of world politics and US foreign policy, it is nigh-on impossible to grasp the complexities of meaning-production, and the ways in which seemingly disparate discourses are connected. In the next chapter, I turn to the empirical analysis of US identity and the Vietnam War in US presidential speeches, as a first step towards demonstrating the intertextuality of politics and popular culture.

Chapter 3: US Presidential Speeches

Die Vereinigten Staaten... 'sind ein Land – vielleicht das einzige – dessen geistiges Fundament die Rhetorik ist'.[1]

(Sacvan Bercovitch quoted in Goetsch 1993a: 11)

There is but one institutional voice in the country and that is the voice of the President.

(Woodrow Wilson quoted in Ceaser *et al.* 1981: 163)

The past does not speak: it must be spoken for.

(Zarefsky 2002: 35)

Introduction

Much has been written about US presidential rhetoric in the last thirty years (see Medhurst [2008] for an overview of the development of the field).[2] Theodore Windt argues that there are, broadly speaking, four approaches to the study, of presidential rhetoric (1987: xxiii): those examining individual speeches;[3] the analysis of rhetorical movements (for instance, the civil rights movement); genre analysis (see, e.g., Campbell and Jamieson 1985, 1990; Simons and Aghazarian 1986; Goetsch 1993b); and miscellaneous/ancillary other analyses (e.g., Emrich *et al.* 2001). However, relatively few analyses have focused on the gendered motifs and representations in presidential rhetoric (although see WAUDAG 1990 and Beasley 2004: 121-48 for two exceptions). Fewer have done so from an intertextual perspective. In this chapter, I conduct a discourse analysis of gendered constructions of US identity in all orally-delivered US presidential inaugural and State of the Union addresses, as well as a number of presidential documents selected by particular keywords, from 7 May 1975 to 31 December 1996 (roughly congruent with the end of Bill Clinton's first

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[1] 'The United States is a country – perhaps the only country – whose spirit is fundamentally based upon rhetoric' (own translation).

[2] See, *inter alia*, Hart (1987); Windt and Ingold (1987); Campbell and Jamieson (1990); Hinckley (1990); Stuckey (1991, 2004); Dolan and Dumm (1993); Goetsch and Hurm (1993); Medhurst (1996b); Aune and Medhurst (2008); Ellis (1998); Dorsey (2002); and Beasley (2004).

[3] Carter's (1979d) 'crisis of confidence' speech is a good example; on this, see, e.g., Hahn (1987c), Hurm (1993a) and Horowitz (2005). Other analyses of individual speeches include Dörner (1993), Volmert (1993) and Medhurst (2000).

administration). This gender analysis, while important in its own right, also forms the basis for the intertextual analysis (with the three films) that is expanded in chapter 7.

The chapter is structured as follows: first, I briefly review the academic literature that deals with the analysis of presidential rhetoric, with a focus on the role of inaugural and State of the Union addresses in US political culture. Thereafter, I analyse these presidents' speeches, chronologically, for representations of: the Vietnam War and its legacies; the US, its identity, characteristics and values;[4] and the US military, its soldiers and veterans, and Vietnam veterans, specifically. I also comment, where such articulations occur, on representations of the Vietnamese state and people. In the analysis of Presidents Bush and Clinton, I also include sections focusing on US domestic society and its problems and challenges, for three reasons: first, because these presidents' speeches focus on this theme; second, because these sections have as their central purpose the (re)articulation of US identity; and, third, because these articulations of US domestic society and 'everyday' citizens are frequently discursively linked with military heroes – often Vietnam veterans in particular –in a way that policy proposals related to reforming the US tax code, for example, are not.

The decision to organise the analysis of the speeches by president should not be understood to imply that no transformations occurred within a particular administration or, conversely, that there are no continuities across the various presidencies. Continuities in representation abound, not only between earlier and later incumbents of the same party but also across partisan lines (most clearly in presidents' representations of US identity). These continuities, as well as any transformations, will be discussed in detail in chapter 7. However, a certain degree of uniformity within the speeches of an individual president is to be expected and, more importantly, the number of speeches is too large for the analysis to be conducted without some preliminary division into smaller, more manageable groupings. The principal focus remains on the form and content of the representations rather than on attempting to establish the degree of coherence that may or may not exist within

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[4] I also discuss, where relevant, the separate articulations of the identity of the US state vis-á-vis US society.

each individual President's speeches, or on identifying unifying generic characteristics.

In analysing the speeches, I have disarticulated rhetorical elements from their original context and constructed new relationships between and among these elements. Thus, the speeches are not analysed as discrete units, nor are they taken in narrative order; that is, part of a speech may be discussed before an examination of a section that preceded it. Similarly, some elements from later speeches may be analysed before, or together with, components of earlier speeches. I have necessarily devoted most analytical time and effort to those sections which refer directly to Vietnam, and to general descriptions of US identity, while downplaying those sections of the speeches which relate to specific aspects of other, less overtly relevant, policies (e.g., inflation, healthcare, taxation policy). For example, several of the speeches start and/or end with historical vignettes, anecdotes and personal reflections, about the Founding Fathers and other famous historical figures (especially previous US Presidents), or about the speaker's recollections of their Congressional debuts. I highlight the rhetorical effects of such practices and representations only where these are of direct analytical interest to the themes being examined.[5]

Although all documents in the supplementary corpus have been examined as part of the research, analytical priority is given to inaugural and State of the Union addresses. Explicit reference is made to documents from the supplementary corpus where the representations found therein illustrate particularly vividly the analytical claims made of the representations identified in the primary corpus or, conversely, where they differ substantially from those found in inaugural and State of the Union addresses. Likewise, attention is only drawn to these representations as stemming from the supplementary corpus where this pertains directly to the argument.

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[5] A note on referencing: since speeches are analysed by individual President and were obtained through The American Presidency Project online (Woolley and Peters, no date) and, as such, do not contain page numbers, I cite both direct quotes and paraphrasings by year only in this chapter.

In the next section, I discuss the ways in which presidential rhetoric has been analysed, focusing on inaugural and State of the Union addresses, in order to set the scene for the analysis that follows.

The Status and Function of Inaugural and State of the Union Addresses

Approaching the Analysis of Presidential Rhetoric

One of the central paradigms around which much academic analysis is oriented is the identification of long-term trends – in terms of both continuities and transformations.[6] In particular, the concept of a 'rhetorical presidency', seen to emerge with Wilson (or more recently), has been vigorously contested over the last thirty years.[7] In terms of specific genres, inaugural and State of the Union addresses have been examined from a variety of perspectives and with different analytical foci.[8] Other dimensions of analysis include the rhetorical qualities of particular presidents[9] and of comparisons between presidents (e.g., Fischer and Vorländer 1993; Dille 2000; Smith 2003); the examination of rhetoric for specific topics, such as voluntarism (Adams 1987), religion (Coe and Domke 2006), 'manifest destiny' (Coles 2002), economic leadership (Wood 2004), trade rhetoric (Conti 1995), moral rhetoric (Shogan 2007), or the 'New World Order' (Miller and Yetiv 2001; Lazar and Lazar 2004); the function of, for example, charisma (Emrich *et al.* 2001; Bligh *et al.* 2004; Mio *et al.* 2005), orality (Kowal and O'Connell 1993; Kowal *et al.* 1997) or hand gestures in speech performances (Whitehead and Smith 2002); and the complex

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[6] E.g., Ragsdale (1984); Hart (1986); Green (1987); Neustadt (1990); Goetsch (1993a); Walker *et al.* (1999); Lim (2002); Zarefsky (2002, 2004); Ritter and Medhurst (2003); Teten (2003); Hart and Childers (2004); Metcalf (2004); Wattenberg (2004); Flint *et al.* (2009).

[7] See, *inter alia*, Ceaser *et al.* (1981); Smith (1983); Hart (1984); Tulis (1987, 1996, 1998); Campbell (1996); Ivie (1996); Medhurst (1996b); Lewis (1997); Ellis (1998b); Dorsey (2002, 2008).

[8] On inaugurals, see, e.g., Chester (1980); Germino (1984); Campbell and Jamieson (1985, 1990); Gronbeck (1986); Miller and Stiles (1986); Gester (1993a); Schulz (1993); Ericson (1997); Whissell and Sigelman (2001); on States of the Union, see Gester (1993b); Teten (2003); Beasley (2004).

[9] E.g., Hahn (1987a, 1987b); Smith (1987a, 1987b); Stelzner (1987); Stuckey (1989); Hurm (1993b); Conti (1995); Goodnight (1996, 2002); Hall (2002); Murphy (2002); Rowland and Jones (2002); Muir (2003); Patton (2003); Olson (2004); Liu (2007).

relationships between presidential rhetoric, the media and public opinion.[10] Many of these themes and debates are beyond the scope of this chapter. However, a few useful insights can be drawn out of these analyses.

Elvin Lim notes the 'de-intellectualisation' of presidential rhetoric, and a tendency towards the use of more colloquial phrases, since the nineteenth century and particularly since the mid-1970s (2002: 333): '[p]residential rhetoric has become more conversational... more intimate... focused increasingly on the trustworthiness of the rhetor, and... more anecdotal' (343). Presidential rhetoric has also 'become much more assertive... activist, "realist", and confident' (335), allied with 'an increasing lack of humility' (337). He argues that '[a]s modern presidents have rhetorically represented themselves increasingly as protectors and defenders of the people, their rhetoric has also tended to aggrandize their status within the governmental system' (339). Since Reagan, references to religion have also increased (335).

In her analysis of symbolism in four types of major presidential addresses (inaugurals, States of the Union, and economic and foreign policy speeches) and a number of categories of minor speeches, Barbara Hinckley identifies 'pictures of government' that emerge from presidents' rhetoric (1990: 131-2). The US government is depicted as being constituted by three actors –president, people, and nation – and that presidents 'work alone... with little help from Congress, administration officials, or other advisors... When Congress is mentioned at all, it is trivialized and dismissed' (131), appearing active 'primarily in planning or returning from its adjournment' (50). The types of activity discussed in presidential addresses demonstrate 'a consistency across presidents independent of differences in personality, political background, and rhetorical style' (86). In these speeches, 'use of the plural far out-numbers the singular, whether "I", "the president", "this administration" or a synonym' (43).[11]

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[10] E.g., Blankenship (1986); Ragsdale (1987); Simon and Ostrom (1989); Ludes (1993); Cohen (1995); Andrade and Young (1996); Edwards (1996); Schaefer (1997); Hall (2002); Rowland and Jones (2002); Sigelman and Whissell (2002a, 2002b); Welch (2003a, 2003b); Druckman and Holmes (2004); Wattenberg (2004); Gershkoff and Kushner (2005).

[11] See Weldes (1999b: 105-6) for a discussion of the ambiguous nature of the use of 'we' in articulations of US identity.

Historical references 'focus almost entirely on four Presidents—Washington, Lincoln, Jefferson, Franklin Roosevelt—or on allusions to the American Revolution, the 1930s depression, or twentieth-century wars' (Hinckley 1990: 61) but although '[w]e see the burying grounds of Americans killed in battle and national monuments... we lack detail about the real, though unheroic, world of the past and present' (64). Indeed, 'no matter what the experiences of the past, the presidents say that this past can be disregarded. The problems will not continue because the presidency can make all things new' (64). In these speeches, then, '[t]he present is new, the future holds ever more promise, and the past is forgotten... This theme... is central to the American myth... [and] inaugurals... show the effect most clearly' (Hinckley 1990: 62).

Inaugural Addresses

Inaugural speeches have tended to be denigrated by scholars of presidential rhetoric (Chester 1980: 571; Campbell and Jamieson 1985: 394). The inaugural speech is not, in fact, a Constitutional requirement but was a practice begun by Washington and it is now unthinkable that a president would not give one upon his or her inauguration (Zarefsky 2002: 24). The inaugural is the 'keynote' for the president's four-year term and is preserved in the permanent historical record (Whissel and Sigelman 2001: 255).[12] Zarefsky argues that the inaugural address was 'permanently changed' by William Jefferson in the early nineteenth century (2002: 25). Since that time, inaugural addresses have tended to be

> remarkably similar to each other, both in content and language. The same general themes are voiced again and again; the same verbal formulas are repeated over and over. This pattern persists regardless of the partisan affiliation of the incoming president or a host of other factors that differentiate new presidents from one another. (Ericson 1997: 728)

Presidents and their speechwriters both 'capitalize on, and are constrained by the inaugurals of their predecessors' (Campbell and Jamieson 1985: 406). Inaugural addresses are shaped by their epideictic character,[13] the rite of passage and the

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[12] With the advent of the Internet, this is now true of all speeches, remarks and documents.
[13] That is, they deploy 'a form of rhetoric that praises or blames on ceremonial occasions' (Aristotle in Campbell and Jamieson 1985: 395).

tradition of previous inaugural addresses (407). In particular, 'recollection of a shared past is an exceptionally important resource' in such speeches (O'Malley in Campbell and Jamieson 1985: 395), and 'the language of conservation, preservation, maintenance, and renewal pervades inaugurals' (Campbell and Jamieson 1985: 399). They therefore provide 'glimpses into both a nostalgic and an idealized vision of American political community' (Beasley 2004: 10) and this veneration of the past is deployed to justify 'present and future action' (Campbell and Jamieson 1985: 400).

The central function of the inaugural address is 'to reaffirm the American people's belief in the "public philosophy" of the United States' (Gester 1993a: 31), to express 'deep-seated cultural beliefs', rather than 'such transient features of American politics as the incoming president's policy agenda' (Ericson 1997: 728, 727). Thus, when specific policies *are* put forward, 'it is for contemplation, not action. Policy proposals are not an end in themselves but illustrations of the political philosophy of the President' (Campbell and Jamieson 1985: 400).[14]

Since the end of the Second World War, US presidents 'have tended to stress foreign policy in their inaugural addresses' (Chester 1980: 579-80). The image of the US in twentieth-century inaugurals 'is of a nation that fights for peace, respects the rights and cultures of other nations, and has been forced to play a more active international role by circumstances beyond its control' (Ericson 1997: 737). In their analysis of all 53 inaugurals from George Washington to Bill Clinton, Whissel and Sigelman find that the general trend has been towards the simplification of language and the increasing use of symbolic language (Sigelman in Whissel and Sigelman 2001: 260). Presidential rhetoric has become more 'positive, active, and rich in the ability to generate picture' (Whissel and Sigelman 2001: 269). In terms of this symbolic language, first-person plural pronouns, light/dark metaphors, and the metaphor of the 'road' have also predominated (Gester 1993a: 43-4, 49). In another study, David Ericson (1997) identified eleven themes within inaugural addresses since Washington, finding that civic virtue, national unity, an 'American mission', political continuity, popular support, and belief in a 'providential supreme being' appear in all of the inaugurals

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[14] Campbell and Jamieson also note that '[t]his contemplative, expository function differentiates policy proposals embedded in inaugurals from those in State of the Union addresses' (Campbell and Jamieson 1985: 400).

analysed in this chapter, while the president's role as defender of the Constitution and the union are not mentioned by Carter, Reagan, Bush or Clinton. I explore some of these concepts, themes and findings in greater detail in the empirical analysis, below.

State of the Union Addresses

Although it is a Constitutional requirement that the president report 'from time to time' to Congress on the state of the union, these reports were not intended by the Framers to be compulsory, annual (or, indeed, orally-delivered) addresses. Woodrow Wilson revived the tradition of delivering the address in person to Congress, thereby making 'an implicit argument that the executive branch, not Congress, is the source of governmental leadership. Attention is focused on the president; he initiates the legislative agenda; he has the active role while members of Congress passively receive the message' (Zarefsky 2002: 26). In 1934, these messages to Congress became permanent, non-discretionary, annual events, acquiring the name 'State of the Union' (Teten 2003: 337; Schaefer 1997: 98). State of the Union addresses are now 'an institutionalized, routine activity of the presidency, and the individual speeches are in some senses comparable' (Cohen 1995: 90).

As with the inaugural address, the State of the Union is 'a ceremonial occasion that presidents have used strategically to enhance their political position' (Zarefsky 2002: 26). States of the Union are aimed at Congress and form the core of the president's legislative agenda, at the same time as they are directed at the media and the general public, attracting substantial media attention (Schaefer 1997: 98). The State of the Union address is now 'the one great public document of the United States which is widely read and discussed' (Campbell and Jamieson 1990: 52), a '"once-a-year chance for the modern president to inspire and persuade the American people"' (Saad quoted in Druckman and Holmes 2004: 759). However, whereas inaugural addresses are about change and renewal, State of the Union addresses 'are the rhetoric of institutional maintenance' (Campbell and Jamieson 1990: 74), in which presidents have the opportunity to construct a shared history and national identity.

State of the Union speeches are 'characterized by three processes: (1) public meditations on values, (2) assessments of information and issues, and (3) policy recommendations' (Campbell and Jamieson 1990: 54; see also Beasley 2004: 11). In these addresses, presidents have often 'tacitly invite[d] the eavesdropping national audience to make its support for legislation known to the members of Congress' (Campbell and Jamieson 1990: 66). While, on occasion, 'presidents frame recommendations as indictments of the country for failing to live up to its promises to all its citizens' (59), these addresses are 'an annual act of political theatre that demands the president claim that the United States is "strong" or "healthy"' (Flint *et al.* 2009: 605). Indeed, '[n]o president, no matter how pessimistic or how severe the crisis, has ever reported that the state of the Union was such that its problems could not be surmounted' (Campbell and Jamieson 1990: 55).

Having set the general scene in terms of the sub-field of presidential rhetoric, in the next section I embark upon a detailed analysis of the representations articulated by each president. From a superficial reading of the speeches, it would appear that all five leaders make attempts to represent both individual men and women in their speeches, to put forward policy proposals that appear feminist and to use gender neutral and gender inclusive language when referring to the people of the US. States are attributed feminine pronouns in the speeches of Reagan and Bush. However, this merely scratches the surface of the gendered discourses at work in these speeches. I now highlight, in the next five sections (organised chronologically by president), the less immediately visible – but no less powerful or important – ways in which presidents' representations of the Vietnam War, its aftermath, US identity, the US military soldiers and Vietnam veterans are constructed as gendered. I begin with the speeches of President Ford.

Gerald Ford (R): 1975-1977

Gerald Ford has been described as the US's first 'accidental president' (Brinkley 2007: 147), since he stood for election for neither the presidency nor the vice presidency. His rise to the presidency occurred as a result of the resignation of, first, Vice President Spiro Agnew (in October 1973) and, later, President Richard Nixon (in

August 1974). During his short incumbency, Ford faced both domestic and foreign policy crises, including concerns over energy supplies and the capture of the US merchant ship SS *Mayaguez* by Cambodian troops (McCrisken 2003: 46-53). He also presided over the nation's bicentennial celebrations in 1976.

The Vietnam War and its Legacies

When Ford took office, the US was 'deeply divided and tormented. ... We were still struggling with the after-effects of a long, unpopular, and bloody war in Southeast Asia. ... During the same period our national security needs were steadily shortchanged' (1977a). Ford depicts the Vietnam War as a traumatic event for the US state and nation in both State of the Union addresses analysed here, although he tends to avoid using the word 'Vietnam' itself:

> The longest, most divisive war in our history was winding toward an unhappy conclusion. Many feared that the end of that foreign war of men and machines meant the beginning of a domestic war of recrimination and reprisal. Friends and adversaries abroad were asking whether America had lost its nerve. ... Ours was a troubled land. (1976)

As a result of the Vietnam War, 'our will to maintain our international leadership was in doubt' (1977a). In terms of the military and economic challenges currently facing the US, he references Vietnam obliquely, arguing that these arose because

> We wanted to accomplish great things and solve age-old problems. And we became overconfident of our abilities. We tried to be a policeman abroad and the indulgent parent here at home... we shifted our emphasis from defense to domestic problems while our adversaries continued a massive buildup of arms. (1976)

Ford singles out the Vietnam War as 'both materially and psychologically, affect[ing] our overall defense posture. The dangerous anti-military sentiment discouraged defense spending and unfairly disparaged the men and women who serve in our Armed Forces' (1977a). Two concerns that Ford mentions in both speeches are the financial and legislative Congressional restrictions on the US President's ability to act in world politics, identifying US foreign policy in Vietnam as responsible for these dangerous tendencies:

> The war in Indochina consumed enormous resources at the very time that the overwhelming strategic superiority we once enjoyed was disappearing. In past years, as a result of decisions by the United States, our strategic forces leveled off, yet the Soviet Union continued a steady, constant buildup of its own forces, committing a high percentage of its national economic effort to defense. (1977a)

This is a concern for Ford because the US 'would risk the most serious political consequences if the world came to believe that our adversaries have a decisive margin of superiority' (1977a). The 'crippling' of the US's foreign intelligence capabilities is a specific issue because it 'increases the danger of American involvement in direct armed conflict', in that 'adversaries are encouraged to attempt new adventures while our own ability to monitor events and to influence events short of military action is undermined... the United States stands blindfolded and hobbled' (1976).

Ford articulates the relationship between the legislative and executive branches of government in foreign policy as a partnership of complementary roles:

> The American people want strong and effective international and defense policies. In our constitutional system, these policies should reflect consultation and accommodation between the President and the Congress. But in the final analysis, as the framers of our Constitution knew from hard experience, the foreign relations of the United States can be conducted effectively only if there is strong central direction that allows flexibility of action. That responsibility clearly rests with the President. (1976)
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> I express the hope that this new Congress will reexamine its constitutional role in international affairs. ... There can be only one Commander in Chief. In these times crises cannot be managed and wars cannot be waged by committee... [the President] and his emissaries must not be handicapped in advance in their relations with foreign governments as has sometimes happened in the past. (1977a)

Ford's most powerful and explicit depiction of this relationship occurs in his final State of the Union, in which he claims that: 'I returned [to Congress] eight months later as your President to ask not for a honeymoon, but for a good marriage' (1977a).

A 'New Direction', Based on Old Values

However, Ford is also clear that these challenges and crises should not involve tortured recriminations:

> We should be proud of what America, what our country, has accomplished in these areas [of world politics], and I believe the American people are. The American people have heard too much about how terrible our mistakes, how evil our deeds, and how misguided our purposes. ... I say it is time we quit downgrading ourselves as a nation. Of course, it is our responsibility to learn the *right* lesson from past mistakes. It is our duty to see that they never happen again. But our greater duty is to look to the future. (1976, emphasis added)

Ford argues that 'in the recent past, we sometimes forgot the sound principles that guided us through most of our history' (1976). The correct lesson to draw from these experiences is therefore a 'new direction' for the US that is 'true to the great principles upon which this Nation was founded' (1977a, 1976). Ford's new direction 'is the right direction because it follows the truly revolutionary American concept of 1776' (1976):

> Like our forefathers... if we meet the challenges of our own time with a common sense of purpose and conviction, if we remain true to our Constitution and to our ideals, then we can know that the future will be better than the past. (1976)

Ford announces the need to set a new course in both State of the Union addresses, based on a 'new realism' (1976, 1977a) and a 'new balance', in the economy, between government and individual, in the federal relationship between nation and state, and between domestic and defence spending (1976). This direction requires 'determination', 'hard choices' and 'urgent action' (1977a), in order to achieve 'goals' and 'solutions' (1976, 1977a). In his second State of the Union, Ford confidently declares that the US is 'crossing a threshold... [having been] tested in adversity' (1976) and '[c]ommon sense tells me to stick to that steady course' (1976). 1975 'taught us something important about America [and] brought back a needed measure of common sense, steadfastness, and self-discipline', which led to an 'America resurgent' (1976). The US is 'moving forward as before toward a more

perfect Union' (1976), rebuilding confidence in the US Presidency, in the political system and in the future (1977a). By 1977, Ford declares that '[o]nce again, Americans believe in themselves, in their leaders, and in the promise that tomorrow holds for their children' (1977a).

US Identity: Moral Leadership and Peace through Strength

The US is 'the World's greatest democracy', the 'symbol of man's aspiration for liberty' and the 'embodiment of hope for progress' (1976). Ford references Eisenhower's claim that 'America is not good because it is great... America is great because it is good' (1976). The US is a 'moral union of immutable ideals' (1977a), always operating out of the best of intentions (1976). The theme of moral progress – and the US's place at the forefront of this progress – is evident in Ford's rhetoric in three metaphorical senses. One is the notion of progress, of moving 'forwards' (1976, 1977a); the second and third metaphors invoke height and light:

> One peak stands highest in the ranges of human history. One example shines forth of a people uniting to produce abundance and to share the good life fairly and with freedom. ... That union is the United States of America. (1976)

Ford emphasises the continuing importance of US leadership in the international sphere: '[m]ore than ever, our own well-being depends on America's determination and America's leadership in the whole wide world' (1976). He discursively links the contemporary era with both US independence and the Second World War (both constructed as just wars in US discourse): the US has played a 'unique role in the world since the day of our independence 200 years ago. And ever since the end of World War II, we have borne – successfully – a heavy responsibility for ensuring a stable world order and hope for human progress' (1976).

The 'American leadership' role is primarily one of responding to and deterring aggression in order to maintain the peace (1977a). The US is a 'peaceful' nation, committed to 'the side of peace and justice' (1977a) and to 'policies which seek a secure, just, and peaceful world' (1976). The US's 'first goal is and always will be

peace with honor'[15] and Ford is 'determin[ed] to honor our vital commitments in defense of peace and freedom' (1977a). US foreign policy is based on the principle of defence: 'America must remain first in keeping peace in the world. We can remain first in peace only if we are never second in defense' (1977a). The US requires a 'strong defensive posture' and 'strong and effective international and defense policies' (1976). The United States has 'strong defenses, strong alliances, and a sound and courageous foreign policy' (1977a). Its role in international affairs is characterised as one of successful problem-solving and crisis-management (1977a). US policies are based on 'wisdom' (1977a), 'common sense' (1976, 1977a) and 'realism' (1976, 1977a), and require 'courage' (1976, 1977a) and 'stamina' (1977a). US action is taken with 'vigor' (1976), and its actions 'stimulate' (1976, 1977a), 'shape' (1977a) and 'influence' (1976). All of these are masculine attributes.

The US Military, Soldiers and Veterans

US military forces are 'capable and ready' (1976, and US military power is 'without equal' (1976). Aside from generic references to the strength, capabilities and preparedness of US military forces, Ford only makes one other direct reference to soldiers and veterans in either State of the Union address: 'I will take further steps to improve the quality of medical and hospital care for those who have served in our Armed Forces' (1976). In one of the documents in the supplementary corpus – a letter to Mrs Philip A. Hart, in which he explains his policy of 'earned clemency' for those men who had evaded the draft and/or deserted during the Vietnam War-era, he argues that he is 'of the belief that it was very important for the country that the post-Vietnam reconciliation take place in an atmosphere that restored unity', in order to heal 'our country's Vietnam wounds' (1977b).

A number of inter-related points can be made with regard to the gendering of US identity in the post-Vietnam context here. Ford's remarks concerning the US's 'loss of nerve' and its 'will' being 'in doubt' suggest psychological trauma, and his use of terms such as 'wounds', 'crippling', 'blindfolded', 'hobbled' and 'handicapped'

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[15] This phrase is an explicit reference to former President Nixon's description of the 1973 Paris Peace Accords between the US and North Vietnam, and of the outcome of the conflict in Vietnam (Nixon 1973).

represents the US as not fully physically or mentally able. There is also the notion of the US as an 'indulgent parent', being dangerously preoccupied with domestic problems at the expense of national security and defence policy. These constructions indicate an understanding of the US body politic as damaged, not 'tough' enough, and as having become soft (emasculated). The indulgent parent could also be understood as a more feminine subject-position.

In order to counter these constructions, the predicates Ford uses to describe the 'new direction' the US is taking, and his description of the US's international role historically – realism, hardness, action, common sense, steadfastness, commitment, strength, courage, stamina, vigour – are all gendered binaries that are inflected as masculine (the feminine being associated with softness, passivity, irrationality, emotion, weakness and cowardice). The metaphors Ford deploys are also gendered masculine, and the most overt masculinisation of US identity comes in his portrayal of the relationship between the President and Congress. It is the President who has the power and ability to act in world politics, and who is being dangerously restricted by Congress. In describing this relationship as a marriage, Ford clearly feminises Congress and imbues the Presidency with masculine traits.

Jimmy Carter (D): 1977-1981

Carter, a progressive liberal candidate from Georgia who was deeply committed to using the US's global leadership role to make progress on global human rights issues, came to power as 'a Washington outsider, untainted by the years of torment surrounding Vietnam and Watergate' (McCrisken 2003: 56; Collins 2007: 18). However, like Ford, his presidency soon became mired in the challenges of the global energy crisis and other foreign policy crises – the Iranian hostage crisis and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan – and his handling of all three issues was increasingly perceived by elites in Washington, the media and the general public as inept and ineffectual (McCrisken 2003: 76, 80).

Carter begins his inaugural address by thanking President Ford 'for all he has done to heal our land' (1977a). Carter also acknowledges that the US has been through a 'divisive and painful period' in its recent history (1979b). Carter does not explicitly link the 'serious problems' (1978), 'major international cris[e]s' and 'domestic turmoil' (1978) of the recent past to the conflict in Vietnam – indeed, Carter does not mention Vietnam at all in the four primary corpus speeches analysed here.[16] The problems that the US has faced are, for Carter, both domestic and international in nature, but are more explicitly connected with energy and the economy rather than with US intervention in Indochina. In the section of his 1980 State of the Union where he draws out the past successes of US foreign policy in 'containing' an expansionist Soviet Union, Carter glosses over the conflict in Southeast Asia altogether:

> In the 1950s we helped to contain further Soviet challenges in Korea and in the Middle East, and we rearmed to assure the continuation of that containment. In the 1960s we met the Soviet challenges in Berlin, and we faced the Cuban missile crisis. And we sought to engage the Soviet Union in the important task of moving beyond the cold war and away from confrontation. And in the 1970s three American Presidents negotiated with the Soviet leaders in attempts to halt the growth of the nuclear arms race. (1980a)

However, in articulating a vision of the future in which 'we will fight our wars against poverty, ignorance, and injustice, for those are the enemies against which our forces can be honorably marshaled' (1977a), he implicitly signals that the Vietnam War was not an honourable marshalling of force. Similarly, in declaring that the US has 'once again found our moral course' (1978), that '[w]e've restored a moral basis for our foreign policy' (1979a), that the US has 'regained its special place of leadership in the worldwide struggle for human rights' (1979a) and that the US 'will not behave in foreign places so as to violate our rules and standards here at home' (1977a), Carter implies that the US had lost its moral course; noticeably, he does not claim that the US has never behaved in such a way as to violate its own rules and standards.

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[16] In documents from the supplementary corpus, Carter is more direct, acknowledging that the nation was 'divided by this war' (1980b; see also 1979b).

More than Ford before him, or Reagan after, Carter focuses on the US's shortcomings, as well as on his own personal failings: 'Your strength can compensate for my weakness, and your wisdom can help to minimize my mistakes' (1977a) and '[i]f we make a mistake in this administration, it will be on the side of frankness and openness with the American people' (1978). A year after coming to power, he admits that 'the fact remains that on the energy legislation, we have failed the American people' (1978). In particular, '[i]n our foreign policy, the separation of people from government has been in the past a source of weakness and error' (1978). Of the Vietnam War he declares that 'it is important that we remember honestly, realistically, with humility' (Carter 1979b) and describes his own rhetorical attempts in this regard as 'fumbling' (1979c).

A 'New Foundation', Based on Old Values

These problems (again) require new approaches: 'We Americans have a great deal of work to do together. ... We must seek fresh answers, unhindered by the stale prescriptions of the past' (1978). Carter emphasises the 'new partnership', 'new spirit', 'new foundation', and the renewal of confidence: in his inaugural speech, he declares that this ceremony 'marks a new beginning, a new dedication within our Government, and a new spirit among us all' (1977a) and asks the US public to help him 'create together a new national spirit of unity and trust' (1977a). A year later he reiterates his call that this 'new atmosphere demands a new spirit, a partnership between those of us who lead and those who elect' (1978). The challenge is 'to build a new and firmer foundation for the future', 'a new foundation – a better foundation – for our beloved country' and a 'new foundation for a peaceful and a prosperous world' (1979a). In order to achieve this, the United States requires 'reconciliation, rebuilding, and rebirth' (1978). These challenges are 'formidable. But there's a new spirit of unity and resolve in our country' (1980a) and the US has 'emerged from bitter experiences chastened but proud, confident once again, ready to face challenges once again, and united once again' (1978).

However, while on the one hand claiming this as new, much in the same way that Ford's new direction is based on the principles of 1776, Carter's new foundation is

characterised as a return to the principles on which the US was founded because these 'earliest national commitments, modified and reshaped by succeeding generations, have served us well' (1979a). Quoting a high-school teacher of his, Carter argues that the US must '"adjust to changing times and still hold to unchanging principles"... I have no new dream to set forth today, but rather urge a fresh faith in the old dream' (1977a). This old dream has not been completely fulfilled: 'Two centuries ago, our Nation's birth was a milestone in the long quest for freedom. But the bold and brilliant dream which excited the founders of this Nation still awaits its consummation' (1977a). He calls on the US public to '[l]et our recent mistakes bring a resurgent commitment to the basic principles of our Nation, for we know that if we despise our own government, we have no future' (1977a). Like Ford, Carter references US independence to establish the continuity and enduring nature of US identity and US values:

> To establish those values, two centuries ago a bold generation of Americans risked their property, their position, and life itself. We are their heirs, and they are sending us a message across the centuries. The words they made so vivid are now growing faintly indistinct, because they are not heard often enough. They are words like "justice," "equality," "unity," "truth," "sacrifice," "liberty," "faith," and "love." These words remind us that the duty of our generation of Americans is to renew our Nation's faith. (1979a)

US Identity: Moral Leadership and Peace through Strength

Carter wishes to demonstrate 'our Nation's continuing moral strength and our belief in an undiminished, ever-expanding American dream' (1977a). The US is 'a great country, a strong country, a vital and a dynamic country – and so we will remain. We are a confident people and a hardworking people, a decent and a compassionate people' (1978). The US has 'a noble history, a history of patriotism and sacrifice, a history of courage in times of crisis' (1979c) and is 'a proudly idealistic nation, but let no one confuse our idealism with weakness' (1977a). The US is 'actively engaged' (1980a), acts when necessary (1978, 1980a), 'resolute[ly]' (1980a) vigorously (1978, 1980a), with conviction (1979a), carefully (1978, 1980a) and with 'quiet confidence and careful determination' (1978). It 'strives' (1980a) and pursues efforts 'with vigor and with determination' (1980a) but does not hesitate (1978, 1980a), make decisions based on 'sentiment' (1979a) or 'abandon' its efforts (1980a). It is a nation which

'stand[s] firm' (1978), has the 'courage to face hard decisions' (1978), is 'never... afraid to face problems and to solve problems' (1979a) and meets challenges 'squarely and courageously' with 'national resolve and... brave achievement' (1980a).

Carter's vision of the US's role in world affairs is built around peace and human rights (1979b). The US has 'no desire' to be 'the world's policeman. But America does want to be the world's peacemaker' (1979a). The US is 'a peace-seeking nation' (1979b), 'actively engaged in promoting world peace' (1980a), working 'for peaceful solutions to dangerous conflicts' (1979a). The US's identity as peacemaker and supporter of human rights is founded upon its strength; Carter's primary objective

> is and will remain the security of our country. Security is based on our national will, and security is based on the strength of our Armed Forces. We have the will, and militarily we are very strong. Security also comes through the strength of our alliances. (1978)

The US 'will remain the strongest of all nations' (1980a) because 'America's military power is a major force for security and stability in the world' (1979a). The US's 'new foundation' is built 'from a position of national strength – the strength of our own defenses, the strength of our friendships with other nations, and of our oldest American ideals' (1979a) and it will continue to use its 'great strength and influence to settle international conflicts in other parts of the world before they erupt and spread' (1979a) because 'freedom and peace in the world depend on the state of our Union' (1980a).

Carter's earlier speeches are more optimistic than his 1980 State of the Union, in which both the Iranian hostage crisis and the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan are prominent themes, and in which the President outlines an approach that would later become known as the Carter Doctrine: 'Since the end of the Second World War, America has led other nations in meeting the challenge of mounting Soviet power' (1980a) and therefore an

> attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force. (1980a)

The USSR is positioned as irresponsible, threatening, 'radical' and 'aggressive' (1980a), attempting to 'extend its colonial domination' and 'subjugate the fiercely independent and deeply religious people of Afghanistan'. Soviet attempts to dominate the world's supply of oil could therefore pose 'the most serious threat to the peace since the Second World War' (1980a). Nevertheless, despite such strong rhetoric, the only concrete actions Carter proposes are 'not issu[ing] any permits for Soviet ships to fish in the coastal waters of the United States', cutting off the Soviets' access to 'high-technology equipment' and 'agricultural products', limiting 'other commerce' and boycotting the 1980 Moscow Olympics (190a). He also sounds a concessionary note when stating that the USSR should be allowed to pursue 'its own legitimate, peaceful concerns' (1980a).

The US Military, Soldiers and Veterans

In the three documents from the supplementary corpus, Carter describes Vietnam veterans as 'brave', 'loyal', 'courage[ous], 'patrioti[c]', (1979b), who 'had to demonstrate an extra measure of heroism' (1979c) because of the nation's 'uncertainty', 'lack of agreement' (1979b) and 'inner conflict' (1980b) about the war and its 'attitude of neglect toward the Vietnam veterans' (1979c). Veterans have 'wisdom', 'experience' and 'insight' into 'the consciousness of America' (1979c). However, Carter also comments on the inequalities of the draft system. Conscripts were 'those who were most unfortunate, who were deprived of political influence, who could not afford to be a student in college, who were relatively inarticulate, and who were disadvantaged to begin with' (Carter 1979c). Although many veterans have 'almost miraculously' reintegrated into society, there are also those 'who have not been able to overcome the psychic or physical damages of the war' (1979c). Carter also discusses the POW/MIAs, arguing that North Vietnam is acting with 'inhumanity and cruelty' (1980b) in not returning the bodies of these soldiers, or any information regarding their whereabouts. The US will 'continue to exert the fullest possible effort to account for all those who are still missing' (1980b). In his remarks accompanying the signing of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bill, Carter surmises that '[p]erhaps even more than those who served, our Nation needs this memorial as a reminder of

what happened in the past, what was lost, and our need to learn from our experience' (1980b).

Although many elements of Carter's rhetoric are similar to those of Ford before him (and Reagan after him), there are some noticeable differences – most fundamentally, Carter's 'unctuous' and ' very public humility' (Hahn 1987b: 336; Stuckey 1991: 104), his implicit and explicit passivity (Hahn 1987b: 336) and his depictions of the US as making mistakes, as demonstrating signs of 'weakness' (Hahn 1987b: 335; Stuckey 1991: 102) as having strayed from its moral path and its leadership role in world affairs, all of which undermine the US's traditional masculine self-conception. All of the components of Carter's rhetoric – 'feeling, tone, language, voice, and physical aspects – contributed to the perception of Carter as a weak man, a weak president' (Hahn 1987b: 350).[17]

While the predicates he uses to portray US identity are conventionally masculinised binary terms – active, strong, resolute, vigorous, determined, unsentimental, firm, courageous, noble – and his call for a 'new foundation' tries to return to a pre-Vietnam conception of US identity – Carter's apparent weakness and accommodating position with regard to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, in particular, functions to undermine, at least in part, the project of remasculinisation that his other representations attempt. His 'recourse to the words of the Prophet Micah, which evoke "sacrifice-readiness", humility and justice, serve to formulate an agenda based on modesty' (Fischer and Vorländer 1993: 229).[18] Carter also explicitly articulates something as having been 'lost' in Vietnam (1980b). This is also true of his depiction of Vietnam veterans: while they are the nation's finest and most patriotic citizens, they are also disadvantaged and damaged victims – as much as a result the nation's neglect as of the war itself. It is worth noting, too, the predicates attributed to other states, through which Carter positions the USSR as aggressive, threatening and dominating, and Vietnam as inhuman and cruel. The US, in contrast, is peaceful,

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[17] An image not dispelled by his collapse during a 10km run in September 1979, nor by his account of being attacked by a killer rabbit while fishing (Goodnight 2002: 202).
[18] 'Carters Rekurs auf die Worte des Propheten Micah, die nach Opferbereitschaft, Demut und Gerechtigkeit rufen, dient dazu, eine politische Agenda der Bescheidenheit zu formulieren'.

defensive, noble and rational – a bourgeois model of masculinity, contrasted against hypermasculine and irrational enemies.

Ronald Reagan (R): 1981-1988

Prior to his achievements in state and national politics, Ronald Reagan was a Hollywood actor and president of the Screen Actors Guild during the McCarthy era, which 'imbued him with an anti-Communism that became a core ingredient of his emergent political identity' (Collins 2007: 35) and which is easily identifiable in his speeches. His accession to the presidency coincided with the release of the US hostages in Iran, symbolising an end to the crisis-ridden decade of the 1970s and he was elected for a second time in 1984. Perhaps the most popular president of the last fifty years, public opinion on Reagan was and remains sharply divided, between those who saw him as reinvigorating the country, domestically and internationally – as 'a heroic leader who had saved the United States from incipient decline' (2) – and those who viewed his policies as attacking the poor, ethnic minorities, homosexuals, women and other marginalised groups.

The Vietnam War and its Legacies

Reagan echoes the themes found in Ford's and Carter's speeches, articulating the problems of the previous decade as 'the worst crisis in our postwar history. In the seventies were years of rising problems and falling confidence' (1984a). Specifically, '[o]n the international scene, we had an uncomfortable feeling that we'd lost the respect of friend and foe. Some questioned whether we had the will to defend peace and freedom' (1984a). In its international relations, he argues that, when he came to power, 'America was weak' (1988a). When Reagan first came to power, he declared that 'Americans' faith in their governmental process was steadily declining... [and a] new kind of defeatism was heard' (1982). Reagan calls for unity, for 'bipartisan cooperation to stop a long decline that had drained this nation's spirit and eroded its health' (1984a) – although he also claims that the 'cynics were wrong; America never was a sick society' (1984a) – and argues that 'we must not repeat the well-intentioned errors of our past' (1985a).

The Vietnam era was 'a time of trial for our Nation' (1981c), a 'long, dragged-out tragedy... [that] divided our nation and damaged America's self-image' (1981d) and 'threatened to tear our society apart' (1984d). However, Reagan articulates the Vietnam War as a 'noble' and 'just cause' that was 'imperfectly pursued' (1984c, 1988b), a war that US soldiers 'were not allowed to win' (1981d). The one lesson the US should take from the Vietnam War is thus 'that young Americans must never again be sent to fight and die unless we are prepared to let them win' (1988b). The dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was 'a stirring reminder of America's resilience, of how our nation could learn and grow and transcend the tragedies of the past' (1984c). Indeed, sometimes

> when a bone is broken, if it's knit together well, it will in the end be stronger than if it had not been broken. I believe that in the decade since Vietnam the healing has begun, and I hope that before my days as Commander in Chief are over the process will be completed. (1984d)

In his speeches, Reagan invokes memories of past US successes and victories in conflict, articulating wars together in order to forge a sense of moral equivalence among them (although, in the case of Vietnam, he does not name individual locations that were the site of specific victories – perhaps because these places are not as well-known as those of other wars, having been overshadowed by the overall defeat). His inaugural address is a good example of this rhetorical strategy:

> Beyond those monuments to heroism is the Potomac River, and on the far shore the sloping hills of Arlington National Cemetery, with its row upon row of simple white markers bearing crosses or Stars of David. ... Their lives ended in places called Belleau Wood, The Argonne, Omaha Beach, Salerno, and halfway around the world on Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Pork Chop Hill, the Chosin Reservoir, and in a hundred rice paddies and jungles of a place called Vietnam. (1981a)

A 'New Beginning', Based on Old Values

Reagan uses the vocabulary of progress and newness to make a rhetorical break with the problems of the past: 'we, the present-day Americans, are not given to looking backward' (1985a). The US is a nation which 'looks', 'move[s]' and 'go[es] forward'

(1983, 1984a, 1981a, 1985a, 1985b, 1986, 1987), which pushes 'civilization forward' (1984a). In almost all his speeches, Reagan calls for, or refers to, a 'new beginning' (1981a, 1981b, 1982, 1984a, 1985a, 1987, 1988a). The country's 'new strength, confidence, and purpose' (1984a) will lead to a 'new American emancipation' (1985a) a 'new atmosphere of freedom' (1985b; see also 1985a) and a 'new generation of entrepreneurs' (1985b). However, (like Ford and Carter) Reagan's 'new' is a 'renewal' of old principles, and ideals, specifically, those of the nation's founders: 'our New Beginning is a continuation of that beginning created two centuries ago' (1985a). In his earlier speeches (1981-1985), Reagan speaks frequently of renewal – of 'renewed energy and optimism' (1984a), 'national renewal' (1981a; see also 1981b, 1982, 1984a, 1985b): 'Let us renew our determination, our courage, and our strength' (1981a). This renewal is a 'rebirth of bipartisan cooperation, of economic growth, and military deterrence' (1984a), a 'revival of economic confidence' (1983) and a 'spiritual revival' (1984a), that comes 'not by breaking faith with bedrock principles but by breaking free from failed policies' (1986) and from a 'rededication to bedrock values' (1984a).

US Moral Leadership and Peace through Strength

Reagan is explicit and unabashed in extolling the virtues of the US nation, people and state: the US is unique and 'exceptional' (1987), the 'exemplar of freedom' (1981a), the 'last, best hope of man on Earth' (1981b, 1982, 1984a, 1985a), 'this last and greatest bastion of freedom' (1981a, 1982), 'special among the nations of the Earth' (1981a), 'the greatest country on Earth' (1986). Among the most prominent of the values Reagan ascribes to the US are freedom and peace: 'no people on Earth hate war or love peace more than we Americans' (1986). The 'record is clear: Americans resort to force only when we must. We have never been aggressors. We have always struggled to defend freedom and democracy' (1984a). The US is the leader of the 'family of nations' (1983) and '[w]hat is true for families in America is true for America in the family of free nations' (1986). As leader of the free world, the US 'deter[s] war' and 'protect[s] peace' (1988a, 1983). The US is 'a powerful force for good' (1984a), 'a good nation, a moral people' (1988a).

American identity is expressed through binary metaphors, primarily through those of light and hardness. The US nation is 'a beacon of hope' (1981a) and a 'shining star of faith' (1984a), a 'shining city on a hill' (1982), whose actions ensure peace and order when 'when strategically vital parts of the world fall under the shadow of Soviet power' (1982). The US nation is 'a good and worthy people who have brought light where there was darkness, warmth where there was cold' (1984a). The US was responsible for turning 'the tide of history away from totalitarian darkness and into the warm sunlight of human freedom' (1985a). The US is a nation which acts firmly (1982, 1983, 1988a), boldly (1982, 1985a) and 'decisively' (1988a), with courage (1981a, 1983, 1984a, 1985a, 1985, 1986, 1988a), 'determination' (1981a, 1985b, 1987) and 'unshakable resolve' (1983; see also 1982, 1985a, 1985b, 1986, 1987, 1988a). The US takes actions in order to 'steel us for... challenges' (1986), and cannot 'be passive when freedom is under siege' (1985b). Other values Reagan attributes to the US include innovation (1982, 1988a), enterprise (1982, 1984a, 1985a, 1985b, 1986), competitiveness (1981b, 1983, 1984a, 1985b, 1986, 1987, 1988a) and daring (1985a, 1986).

A return to the US's old, pre-existing values requires restoring the nation's unity and confidence in itself, and demonstrating its resolve and strength (1985a): '[o]ur reluctance for conflict should not be misjudged as a failure of will. When action is required to preserve our national security, we will act. We will maintain sufficient strength to prevail' (1981a). Reagan articulates the US as both needing to *keep* and to *renew* its strength. On the one hand, '[t]here's nothing wrong with our internal strengths' (1981b). The US is 'a nation still mighty in its youth and powerful in its purpose' (1985a), and the 'heart of America is strong; it's good and true' (1984a). On the other, 'America in the world is only as strong as America at home' (1987) and 'as we renew ourselves here in our own land, we will be seen as having greater strength throughout the world' (1981a). Reagan's later rhetoric articulates the restoration of confidence and unity (1985a): there has been 'great and robust growth – in our confidence, our economy, and our role in the world' (1985b). The US is now a nation which 'look[s] to the future with confidence' and courage (1984a; see also 1986). In the speeches of Reagan's second administration, values have been 'refound' (1985b), defences have been 'rebuilt', alliances 'restored' (1987, 1988a) and an 'industrial

giant' has been 'reborn' (1985b). Today, 'America is strong... We've replaced "Blame America" with "Look up to America"' (1987). The US is stronger 'because of the values that we hold dear' (1985b). The US is positioned as having 'resumed' its 'historic role as 'a vigorous leader of the free world' (1988a): 'America's leadership in the world came to us because of our own strength and because of the values which guide us as a society ... These values are the bedrock of our strength' (1983).

In Reagan's second inaugural, he reminds the audience of the first US presidential inauguration: 'When the first President, George Washington, placed his hand upon the Bible, he stood less than a single day's journey by horseback from raw, untamed wilderness' (1985a). He discursively articulates the US's frontier past with scientific progress: '[t]he time has come to proceed toward a great new challenge – a second American Revolution of hope and opportunity; a revolution carrying us to new heights of progress by pushing back frontiers of knowledge and space' (1985b). Reagan explicitly links technology and technological progress with the US people's 'pioneer spirit' (1983) and with the US's role as leader of the free world (both in economic and defence terms): 'high technology [is], a field pioneered and still led by our country'; 'We Americans are still the technological leaders in most fields' and '[t]his administration is committed to keeping America the technological leader of the world now and into the 21st century' (1983).

The arena in which the US can most 'effectively demonstrate our technological leadership' is in space, where the US must develop the 'next frontier' (1984a, 1985b) 'the frontier of high technology' (1983). The US has 'pushed civilization forward with our advances in science and technology' (1984a). The resonances between this new frontier and earlier periods of geographical expansion are made explicit: 'Just as the oceans opened up a new world for clipper ships and Yankee traders, space holds enormous potential for commerce today. ... We'll soon... promote private sector investment in space' (1984a). Specific developments – 'new opportunities for free enterprise' (1985b) – include 'a new Orient Express that could, by the end of the next decade, take off from Dulles Airport , accelerate up to 25 times the speed of sound, attaining low Earth orbit or flying to Tokyo within 2 hours' (1986). Within his outline of a technologically-driven future, Reagan devotes the largest proportion of his time

to discussing the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), which would allow 'the same technology transforming our lives [to] solve the greatest problem of the 20th century' (1986):

> I have approved a research program to find, if we can, a security shield that will destroy nuclear missiles before they reach their target. It wouldn't kill people; it would destroy weapons. It wouldn't militarize space; it would help demilitarize the arsenals of Earth. It would render nuclear weapons obsolete. (1985a)

Reagan articulates the SDI as a purely peaceful and defensive proposition (1985a, 1985b, 1987, 1988a) that will function as an 'insurance policy against a nuclear accident, a Chernobyl of the sky, or an accidental launch or some madman who might come along' (1988a).

Although Reagan argues that the world has become a safer place during his two administrations, 'it is not safe', primarily due to the actions of the USSR (1987). The Soviet regime is characterised as 'brutal', irresponsible, expansionist and aggressive, as contrasted with '[r]esponsible members of the world community [who] do not threaten or invade their neighbors. And they restrain their allies from aggression' (1983). Reagan invokes Winston Churchill, who, 'in negotiating with the Soviets, observed that they respect only strength and resolve in their dealings with other nations' (1982). The USSR has 'conducted the greatest military buildup in the history of man, building arsenals of awesome offensive weapons' (1985a), while the US has 'no territorial ambitions. We occupy no countries' (1984a) but has, rather, 'sought the moderation of Soviet power through a process of restraint and accommodation' (1982). With the USSR's '120,000 Soviet combat and military personnel and 15,000 military advisers in Asia, Africa, and Latin America' and a transfer of '$75 billion in weapons' to client states such as Vietnam, Cuba, Afghanistan and Nicaragua, 'can anyone still doubt their single-minded determination to expand their power?' (1987). The US's relationship with the USSR must therefore 'be guided by realism – rock-hard, cleareyed, steady, and sure' (1986).

The US Military, Soldiers and Veterans

Reagan warns that 'we must not relax our efforts to restore military strength just as we near our goal of a fully equipped, trained, and ready professional corps' (1985b) and positions Congress as risking the nation's security: 'I ask you to vote out a defense and foreign affairs budget that says yes to protecting our country. ... Despite this, the Congress cut... defense requests by $85 billion in the last 3 years' (1987). Nevertheless, Reagan claims that US troops 'are finally properly paid; after years of neglect are well trained and becoming better equipped and supplied' (1983). Congress 'deserves America's thanks for helping us restore pride and credibility to our military' (1984a) and '[o]ur country's uniform is being worn once again with pride' (1982, 1983, 1987, 1988a).

Reagan also provides positive examples of the US military post-Vietnam, such as Sergeant Stephen Trujillo, who rescued several wounded US soldiers in Grenada, 'return[ing] again and again to the crash site to carry his wounded friends to safety' (1983). More generally, Reagan refers to his pride in 'the young men and women in uniform who have volunteered to man the ramparts in defense of freedom and whose dedication, valor, and skill increases so much our chance of living in a world at peace' (1984a), to 'the kids on Christmas Day looking out from a frozen sentry post on the 38th parallel in Korea or aboard an aircraft carrier in the Mediterranean. A million miles from home, but doing their duty' (1987). The US owes a debt to the US military because 'a nation's future is only as certain as the devotion of its defenders, and the nation must be as loyal to them as they are to the nation' (1981d).

In speeches from the supplementary corpus, Reagan describes Vietnam veterans as 'true patriots' (1984d) and 'gentle heroes' (1988b), praising 'the devotion and gallantry with which all of them ennobled their nation as they became champions of a noble cause' (1988b). He argues that [n]o one should doubt the nobility of the effort they made' (1981c), their 'loyalty', 'courage', 'dedication' and 'valor' (1981c, 1981d, 1984c). Vietnam combat veterans 'reflected the best in us' (1984d) and much of the nation's new strength 'comes from the forgiveness and healing love that our Vietnam veterans have shown' (1988b). Like Carter, Reagan notes that '[c]ontrary to

an unjust stereotype, the vast majority of Vietnam veterans readjusted quickly after returning from Southeast Asia' but that there are also 'those who found it difficult to come to grips with problems that can be traced to their wartime experiences' (1981d). However, 'the American public overwhelmingly admires the Vietnam-era veteran' (1981c). By the end of Reagan's time in office, 'Vietnam service is once more universally recognized as a badge of pride' (1988b) and as Vietnam veterans 'take their rightful place among America's heroes, it appears to me that we have healed' (1988b).

Reagan also focuses attention on the issue of POW/MIAs:

> we must remember that we cannot today, as much as some might want to, close this chapter in our history, for the war in Southeast Asia still haunts a small but brave group of Americans – the families of those still missing in the Vietnam conflict... Vietnam is not over for them. (1984c)

US 'involvement in Vietnam' cannot end 'before we've achieved the fullest possible accounting of those missing in action' and 'when their families know with certainty that this nation discharged her duty to those who served nobly and well' (1984c). Reagan goes further than Carter, claiming that '[n]early 2,500 of the names on this memorial are still missing in Southeast Asia, and *some may still be serving*' (1984d, emphasis added). Indeed, according to Reagan, 'the sorest wound of this conflict' is the pain of the families of unaccounted-for soldiers (1984c). In a move to demonstrate that his administration is dedicated to this cause, he states that 'we have told Hanoi that is must prove to the American people through its cooperation whether men are still being held against their will in Indochina. Otherwise we will assume some are, and we will do everything we can to find them' (1988b). In his first (official) State of the Union, Reagan explicitly praises those who were held captive in Vietnam as heroes:

> We don't have to turn to our history books for heroes. They're all around us. One who sits among you here tonight epitomized that heroism at the end of the longest imprisonment ever inflicted on men of our Armed Forces. Who will ever forget that night when we waited for television to bring us the scene of that first plane landing at Clark Field in the Philippines, bringing our POWs home? The plane door opened and Jeremiah Denton came slowly

> down the ramp. He caught sight of our flag, saluted it, said, "God bless America," and then thanked us for bringing him home. (1982)

Reagan also articulates the Vietnam War as a noble struggle for freedom through the example of Jean Nguyen, a Vietnamese refugee who graduated from West Point and is an 'American hero' (1985b). Through his invocation of 'heroes' – a concept he mentions in both inaugurals and most States of the Union (1981a, 1982, 1984a, 1985a, 1985b, 1986, 1988a) – he creates discursive links between the military and civilians. He discusses the POWs in tandem with Lenny Skutnik and others who helped to rescue survivors from the plane which crashed into the Potomac River (1982), Jean Nguyen in tandem with 'Mother Hale', who cares for the children of drug addicts (1985b) and Stephen Trujillo in tandem with Father Ritter, who set up a charity home for homeless teenagers (1984a).[19] Other heroes include those 'warmhearted' US Americans 'whose numbers we can't begin to count, who'll begin the day with a little prayer for hostages they will never know and MIA families they will never meet' (1987). He also applies the concept to the US people as a whole, who are all everyday heroes: '[t]hose who say that we're in a time when there are not heroes, they just don't know where to look. ... I'm addressing the heroes of whom I speak – you, the citizens of this blessed land' (1981a; see also 1985b). US citizens' 'patriotism is quiet, but deep. Their values sustain our national life' (1981a). The 'unsung heroes [are] single parents, couples, church and civic volunteers' (1984a), the 'true heroes of our land' are 'the entrepreneurs, the builders, the pioneers, and a lot of regular folks' (1987).

Coming to power after Carter, Reagan saw his task as

> to restore in the American people a sense of control over their lives and over the world. He chose to do this through storytelling. The plot was simple: Find the villain, and eliminate him. Reagan played both the hero, who promised to slay the villain, and the narrator, who told us who the real villains were, and whether or not the hero had done his job. (Stuckey 1991: 114)

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[19] According to Wikipedia, Rev. Bruce Ritter resigned from his position in 1990 amidst allegations of financial impropriety and claims that he had had 'sexual relations with several of the charity's residents', including an accusation by former sex worker and porn actor Kevin Kite (Wikipedia, no date a).

The hero typically embodies the most desirable masculine characteristics. The narrator is also a masculine subject-position, a universal objective standpoint from which truth can be pronounced. The villains may be feminised (e.g., depicted as weak), or may be assigned those masculine characteristics that are undesirable (e.g., aggression). In his major addresses, Reagan narrates 'his own summary of American history, complete with the Declaration of Independence, Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and ten references to twentieth-century wars. The predominant impression is one of America fighting' (Hinckley 1990: 62) and winning – a remasculinisation based on the strength of the US military and its valorisation – and even emulation – within domestic society.

Reagan is the first post-Vietnam president to rearticulate the Vietnam War as a noble cause. One of the rhetorical strategies by which he achieves this is to tie the Vietnam War into a chain of signifiers that includes other conflicts which are already understood by the US public as just wars (e.g., World War II). The trauma, for Reagan, is not the war itself, but the way in which the US lost confidence in itself. Much of Reagan's rhetoric in his State of the Union addresses, therefore, focuses on emphasising the greatness of the US state and its people, using the same masculine predicates and binary metaphors as previous presidents: the US is active, firm, bold, decisive, strong, courageous, determined, resolute, associated with light (as opposed to darkness) and hardness (as opposed to softness) – it has 'bedrock' values. These two metaphors are specifically and explicitly deployed about the Soviet Union: the Soviet Union casts a 'shadow' and the US must be tough and hard in order to counter the Soviet threat. Reagan also represents the USSR as aggressive, expansionist and brutal, in contrast to the US's defensiveness, restraint and rationality.[20]

In particular, Reagan's portrayal of Vietnam veterans attributes to them a number of masculine bourgeois and warrior characteristics: they are patriotic, noble, gallant, gentle yet courageous and excellent soldiers. In order to assert the remasculinisation of the Vietnam veteran and to rearticulate the War as a noble cause, Reagan feminises the US government as responsible for (self-)defeat, and US society as

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[20] In Reagan's speeches more generally, the Soviets are depicted as animals, machines, primitives, criminals, fanatics, satanic, profane, mentally disturbed and as 'implicitly behind every unfortunate turn of events' (Ivie in Smith 1987b: 433).

having been disloyal to the soldiers of that conflict. Congress is also indicted in this feminisation, since, through its passivity, inaction and reluctance to support increases in defence spending, the legislative branch is failing the US people in terms of national security (see Jeffords 1986, 1989). However, Reagan also remasculinises the ordinary US citizen, through the strategy of rhetorical articulation of military heroes with civilian heroes, attributing to civilians the same traits as the veteran – especially the POW veteran. Smith (1987: 439-40) identifies a number of different types of heroes in Reagan's rhetoric: former presidents; servicemen and women; the Founding Fathers; and ordinary people. Connecting statesmen and holders of high office with military forces masculinises the citizen, against an emasculated government, a bloated, passive and inert bureaucracy that stifles the citizen's bold action and innovation.

Where Reagan does diverge from both Ford and Carter is in his use of an additional set of masculinised predicates: in his articulation of US identity as innovative, enterprising, competitive and daring. Reagan deploys the notion of the frontier in his praise of the US as leading the world in scientific advances, invoking an image of US identity as both associated with the Western and with hi-tech research and development, thereby symbolically imbuing these scientific and technical discourses (often considered geeky, white-collar, middle class) with the tropes of stamina, physical strength and endurance associated with the pioneers.[21]

<u>George H. W. Bush (R): 1989-1992</u>

In 1988, George Bush became the first incumbent vice president since Martin Van Buren to be elected president.[22] During his time in the White House, the Berlin Wall came down, East and West Germany were unified, the communist Soviet empire was dismantled and the United States led a coalition of states in a military intervention that reverse the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Against these foreign policy successes,

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[21] Specifically, Schultz (1993: 271) identifies resonances between the themes of Reagan's second Inaugural address and James Fenimore Cooper's *The Pioneers* (1959 [1823]).
[22] While both Richard Nixon and Lyndon Johnson held the office of vice president before becoming president, in the former's case, there was a gap of eight years between these two roles while, in the latter, accession to the presidency was the result of Kennedy's assassination rather than a general election.

however, Bush's poor handling of domestic issues – particularly his U-turn on 'no new taxes' – and his perceived lack of charisma and vision (McCrisken 2003: 131) became obstacles that prevented his securing a second term in office.

The Vietnam War and its Legacies

In his inaugural, Bush, too, addresses the divisions and lack of bipartisanship in the US – 'things may be difficult. We need to compromise; we've had dissension. We need harmony; we've had a chorus of discordant voices' (1989a) – and links these with (the aftermath of) the Vietnam War:

> There has grown a certain divisiveness. We have seen the hard looks and heard the statements in which not each other's ideas are challenged but each other's motives. And our great parties have too often been far apart and untrusting of each other. It's been this way since Vietnam. That war cleaves us still. But, friends, that war began in earnest a quarter of a century ago, and surely the statute of limitation has been reached. This is a fact: The final lesson of Vietnam is that no great nation can long afford to be sundered by a memory. (1989a)

The US (still) faces 'challenges' (1990), 'hard times' and 'troubles... [which are] not all economic' (1992a). At the end of the Cold War, the world is both a safer place – '[t]here are still threats. But the long, drawn-out dread is over' (1992a) as well as remaining a dangerous one: 'though yesterday's challenges are behind us, tomorrow's are being born' (1992a). However, the end of the Cold War means that domestic social problems can be tackled: 'Now we can look homeward even more and move to set right what needs to be set right' (1992a).

Bush also argues that the 'lessons of the Vietnam War have... made the United States a better Nation, a stronger nation' (1992b). In his remarks at the dedication ceremony for the Vietnam Veterans memorial in Dallas, Bush discursively links Vietnam with other conflicts from the twentieth century, arguing that '[f]our times... the sons of America have crossed the oceans to fight for the freedom of others' (1989c) and that 'to defend democracy and liberty is always a valiant cause – in the fields of Flanders to the rugged cliffs of Normandy, whether scaling Korea's hillsides or trudging through those rice paddies of the Mekong' (1989c). Through this

rhetorical strategy, Bush, like Reagan, draws a moral equivalence between Vietnam and previous wars – wars that are more conventionally accepted by the US public as both necessary and successfully prosecuted – and re-presents Vietnam as a similarly just cause. The war in Indochina is articulated as an 'effort to thwart communist expansionism' (1992b) and the Vietnamese refugees (boat people) are 'gallant men and women who fled the very brutality we were fighting' (1989c).

A 'New World', Based on Old Values

Bush also iterates the themes of progress, newness and national renewal. The US is a 'forward-looking' and 'rising nation' (1989b, 1992a). Bush does not 'propose to reverse direction. We're headed the right way' (1989b). In his inaugural, Bush refers to a 'new breeze' four times: 'A new breeze is blowing, and the old bipartisanship must be made new again' (1989a). For nearly fifty years, 'nineteen forty-five provided the common frame of reference, the compass points of the postwar era we've relied upon to understand ourselves' (1990). Now, the 'totalitarian era is passing, its old ideas blown away like leaves from an ancient, lifeless tree' (1989a) by 'the winds of democracy' (1989b) and 'there is new ground to be broken and new action to be taken' (1989a). The end of the Cold War heralds 'the beginning of a new era in the world's affairs' (1990), 'a new world of challenges and opportunities', a 'new world order, where brutality will go unrewarded and aggression will meet collective resistance' (1991). Bush calls for 'renewal... for new initiatives in government, in our communities, and from every American to prepare for the next American century' (1991) because '[w]e have within our reach the promise of a renewed America' (1991).

This renewal is based on old values: 'The old ideas are new again because they're not old, they are timeless' (1989a) and 'this idea called America, was and always will be a new world – our new world' (1990). These 'timeless' values are 'duty, sacrifice, commitment, and a patriotism that finds its expression in taking part and pitching in' (1989a). In his inaugural address, Bush prioritises national unity, a key demonstration of which is bipartisanship. US voters 'didn't send us here to bicker. They ask us to rise above the merely partisan. "In crucial things, unity" – and this, my friends, is crucial'

(1989a; see also 1989b, 1990). Bush asks 'all of us together here in this Chamber, the symbolic center of democracy [to] affirm our allegiance to this idea we call America' (1990) and requests that they all 'avoid a return to unproductive partisan bickering' (1991).

In terms of defence policy specifically, the country 'need[s] fewer regulations. We need less bureaucracy. ... And frankly – and don't take this wrong – we need less congressional micromanagement of our nation's military policy' (1989b). The people 'await action' (1989a; see also 1992a) and it is 'time to act' (1990), to 'produce' (1989a), to 'solve the problem' (1989b). After the Gulf War has been successfully concluded, Bush praises the relationship between Congress and the Executive: 'we did it together. There were honest differences right here in this Chamber. But when the war began, you put partisanship aside, and we supported our troops' (1992a). With regard to the problems and challenges facing the US in the early 1990s, he tells Congress that

> we can defeat hard times together. I believe you'll help. One reason is that you're patriots, and you want the best for your country. And I believe that in your hearts you want to put partisanship aside and get the job done because it's the right thing to do. (1992a)

He also admonishes that '[w]hen people put their party's fortunes, whatever the party, whatever side of this aisle, before the public good, they court defeat not only for their country but for themselves. And they will certainly deserve it' (1992a). However, as long as US Americans 'remember the American idea, so long as we live up to the American ideal, the state of the Union will remain sound and strong' (1990). The 'American ideal' is freedom (1990): 'The power of America rests in a stirring but simple idea, that people will do great things if only you set them free' (1992a; 1989a). The 'conviction and courage' on display in the Gulf War is 'the American character in action' and it is this 'indomitable spirit... that gives us the power and the potential to meet our toughest challenges at home' (1991): '[c]omplacency is not in our character -- not before, not now, not ever' (1989b). The US is a nation that is determined (1990), 'resolute' (1991) and 'steadfast in... purpose' (1991), with 'resolve' (1989b, 1992a), 'commitment' (1990) and the 'will' (1989a) to stand 'where duty required us to stand' (1991) and 'to do what must be done' (1991).

US Moral Leadership and Peace through Strength

Echoing Reagan, for Bush, the US is 'a stronger nation than it was in 1980. Morale in our Armed Forces has been restored; our resolve has been shown. Our readiness has been improved, and we are at peace' (1989b). The US is 'the strongest nation on earth' (1992a) and 'will stay strong to protect the peace' (1989a). The US pursues ever greater strength because 'our strength is a force for good' (1989a) and 'when America is stronger, the world is safer' (1989b). The US leads the world in the struggle for peace (1990), as it is 'the only nation on this Earth that could assemble the forces of peace. This is the burden of leadership and the strength that has made America the beacon of freedom in a searching world' (1991). Like Reagan, Bush uses the binary metaphor of light/dark to articulate US identity: US Americans 'know that there are times when we must step forward and accept our responsibility to lead the world away from the dark chaos of dictators, toward the brighter promise of a better day' (1991; see also 1989c). US leadership has '[n]ever... been so crucial' (1989b) because in a 'new world of challenges and opportunities', 'there's a need for leadership that only America can provide' (1990):

> For generations, America has led the struggle to preserve and extend the blessings of liberty. And today, in a rapidly changing world, American leadership is indispensable. Americans know that leadership brings burdens and sacrifices. But we also know why the hopes of humanity turn to us. We are Americans; we have a unique responsibility to do the hard work of freedom. (1991)

As a result of the collapse of the communist bloc, the US is 'the leader of the West that has become the leader of the world' (1992a) and

> A world once divided into two armed camps now recognizes one sole and preeminent power, the United States of America. And they regard this with no dread. For the world trusts us with power, and the world is right. They trust us to be fair and restrained. They trust us to be on the side of decency. They trust us to do what's right. (1992a)

Restoring Domestic US Society: A Kinder, Gentler Nation

Like Reagan and Carter, but to a much greater extent, Bush is explicit about the domestic problems and challenges facing the US. Bush's desire is 'to make kinder the face of the Nation and gentler the face of the world' (1989a). In his speeches he refers to 'the age of the offered hand' (1989a) and argues that 'if we're to succeed as a nation, we must rediscover' the concepts 'goodness', 'mercy' and 'kindness' (1989b), for the 'strength of a democracy is not in bureaucracy. It is in the people and their communities. In everything we do, let us unleash the potential of our most precious resource – our citizens' (1991). Some of the issues on which Bush touches include drugs, violent crime, homelessness, AIDS, disability, parenting and childcare, the environment, civil rights, racial discrimination and hate crimes. Specifically, he calls for a US in which 'every one of us enjoys the same opportunities to live, to work, and to contribute to society' and where, 'for the first time, the American mainstream includes all of our disabled citizens' (1990). The 'talents' of the 37 million disabled US Americans are 'need[ed]... in America's work force. Disabled Americans must become full partners in America's opportunity society' (1989b). Bush extols the skills and virtues of the US worker, who is 'the most productive worker in the world' (1990).

Crime – especially violent crime – 'saps our strength and hurts our faith in our society and in our future together' (1992a). This behaviour needs to stop because '[r]eally, this is not us. This is not who we are' (1992a). Drug use and supply are equally abhorrent: 'There are few clear areas in which we as a society must rise up united and express our intolerance. The most obvious now is drugs' (1989a). When cocaine was first trafficked into the US, 'it may as well have been a deadly bacteria, so much has it hurt the body, the soul of our country' (1989a). US society – including, parents, teachers and communities – must work together to stop the 'scourge of drugs' (1989b). The problem of drug use is also linked with AIDS (1989b): money set aside to combat drugs 'will be used to expand treatment to the poor and to young mothers. This will offer the helping hand to the many innocent victims of drugs, like the thousands of babies born addicted or with AIDS because of the mother's addiction' (1989b).

A new societal attitude to welfare is also required, in which people have 'a responsibility to get their lives in order; a responsibility to hold their families together and refrain from having children out of wedlock'. Family is the cornerstone of Bush's vision of US society: 'family and faith' are the 'moral compass, the 'anchor' of the nation (1989b, 1990) and 'it's time to determine what we can do to keep families together, strong and sound' (1992a). Bush is concerned about the breakdown of the family 'because it is the family that has the greatest bearing on our future. When Barbara holds an AIDS baby in her arms and reads to children, she's saying to every person in this country: Family matters' (1992a). This concern is not merely a partisan issue: 'the leading mayors from the League of Cities... every one of them, Republican or Democrat, agreed on one thing, that the major cause of the problems of the cities is the dissolution of the family (1992a). Parents should read with their children and help them with their homework (1990) because '[t]hat's how we sustain the state of the Union. ... It all adds up to who we are and who we will be (1990). Parents need to instil values in their children because 'your children look to you for direction and guidance. Tell them of faith and family. Tell them we are one nation under God. Teach them that... of all the gifts they can give the greatest is helping others' (1990). Financial prosperity is not the only desirable goal for one's children:

> We cannot hope only to leave our children a bigger car, a bigger bank account. We must hope to give them a sense of what it means to be a loyal friend; a loving parent; a citizen who leaves his home, his neighborhood, and town better than he found it. (1989a)

More generally, every US citizen has a part to play in the regeneration of domestic US society. Bush refers to charity and community organisations and volunteer workers as 'a Thousand Points of Light' (1989a, 1991): 'We've got to step forward when there's trouble, lend a hand, be what I call a point of light to a stranger in need' (1990):

> I am speaking of a new engagement in the lives of others, a new activism, hands-on and involved, that gets the job done. We must bring in the generations, harnessing the unused talent of the elderly and the unfocused energy of the young. For not only leadership is passed from generation to generation but so is stewardship. And the generation born after the Second World War has come of age. (1989a)

US Military, Soldiers and Veterans

The bravest and most honourable volunteers are those who serve in the US military (1989b). There is 'no one more devoted, more committed to the hard work of freedom than every soldier and sailor, every marine, airman, and coastguardsman, every man and woman now serving in the Persian Gulf' (1991):

> Each of them has volunteered, volunteered to provide for this nation's defense, and now they bravely struggle to earn for America, for the world, and for future generations a just and lasting peace. Our commitment to them must be equal to their commitment to their country. They are truly America's finest. (1991)

The US armed forces represents America at its best: 'to those who worry that we've lost our way', Bush reads from a letter written by a Private who was killed in action in Operation Just Cause in Panama and who 'carried the idea we call America in his heart' (1990). In his final speech, Bush reflects on 'a kind of rollcall of honor' (1992a) for those who participated in the conflicts of the Cold War:

> the cold war didn't end; it was won. And I think of those who won it, in places like Korea and Vietnam. And some of them didn't come back. Back then they were heroes, but this year they were victors. The long rollcall, all the G.I. Joes and Janes, all the ones who fought faithfully for freedom... The world saw not only their special valor but their special style: their rambunctious, optimistic bravery, their do-or-die unity unhampered by class or race or religion. ... What a group of kids we've sent out into the world. (1992a)

Vietnam veterans are also 'the greatest sons and daughters any nation could ever have' (1989c), who 'endured extraordinary hardships and sacrifices', 'in the defense of liberty' (1992b). Bush reiterates the themes put forward by Carter and Reagan: that 'the brave boys who went to Vietnam had to endure two wars. The first was that one waged in the swamps and the jungles abroad, and the second was fought for respect and recognition at home' (1989c). Vietnam veterans 'valued freedom, they valued human dignity, and they loved the US' (1989c) and have something to teach the rest of the US public 'about duty, courage, and love of country' (1992b). With regard to the debate about Vietnam, Bush follows Reagan in arguing that 'however history may judge its execution and outcome, these individuals deserve a hero's

recognition and thanks' (1992b). More specifically, Bush reminds the nation that while POW/MIAs may still be missing – 'missing in action and from our lives – they are not missing from our thoughts or our hearts' (1989c) and that the US 'remain[s] fully committed to obtaining the fullest possible accounting for each of them' (1992b). The families of serving military personnel also 'have a special place in our hearts' (1991).

Against the divisiveness of Vietnam in US society, Bush proposes the need for strength through national unity, and effects this call 'with nostalgic and sentimental language' (Stuckey 1991: 131). The timeless values that Bush articulates as US values demonstrate that he 'views America in traditional gendered terms' (WAUDAG 1990: 197), in that he 'sees his relation to "America"... almost as husband and wife: he refers to himself as "*the man* [our emphasis] you've chosen to lead this government", while America is his good woman' (Bush quoted in WAUDAG 1990: 198, brackets and emphasis in original). Duty, sacrifice, commitment, patriotism – 'this new world of old ideas is highly gendered, inscribing a patriarchal hierarchy' (WAUDAG 1990: 197). Bush 'uses a number of action verbs. ... There is relatively little emphasis on passive verbs' (Stuckey 1991: 126), a noticeably masculine style of rhetoric. He also articulates US identity through the usual masculine predicates – as active, resolute, firm, determined, with courage and conviction – and the metaphors of light (US0 and dark (Other). However, in the metaphors he deploys in his inaugural address – points of light, the book of history, a new breeze, the kite of freedom, 'no agent or agency is specified... "the story" is implicitly already written, not something yet to be devised. In this rhetorical construction of the political moment, we have no power to alter or affect the story' (WAUDAG 1990: 192).

In Bush's narration, 'men comprise the public sphere' while women are in places rendered 'invisible' as US citizens, appearing only as mothers (WAUDAG 1990: 197, 198). Women are visible as mothers in Bush's inaugural in two ways: first, as mothers who occupy themselves with 'the domestic business of living within the means provided by (male) others, of making ends meet' (WAUDAG 1990: 198). Second, they appear as women who need 'solicitous care' (Beasley 2004: 147): '[g]rouped with the homeless, the "children who have nothing", the addicted, and those victimized by

"the rough crime of the streets", the young women the president seeks to help are portrayed as decidedly passive' (Bush quoted in Beasley 2004: 147). In his

> choice of gendered examples and references, [Bush's] speech represents the ideological position that present and future (to be inaugurated) society is one in which men (not women) are the citizenry, the achievers, the politically empowered. Women, by contrast, are chiefly invisible, not important players. (WAUDAG 1990: 198)

The articulations in Bush's inaugural function to make stereotypically gendered images 'all the more easily evoked as the need arises' (WAUDAG 1990: 198) – in particular, militarised images such as 'an older fellow who will throw a salute by himself when the flag goes by and the woman who will tell her sons the words of the battle hymns' (Bush 1989a). However, Bush also wants to re-articulate US society as 'kinder [and] gentler' – a new model of masculinity that differs from Reagan's central articulation of the citizen-hero, becoming one who is concerned with volunteerism and community service in a more caring and less aggressive way.

<u>Bill Clinton (D): 1993-1996</u>

Clinton was the first president to be elected in the post-Cold-War era, achieving victory over Bush 'largely by focusing on the nation's troubled domestic agenda' (McCrisken 2003: 159). During Clinton's first term in office, he re-established normal diplomatic relations with Vietnam but also 'preside[d] over more uses of military force than any of his post-Vietnam predecessors' (McCrisken 2003: 159). In particular, he was criticised for appearing to use military intervention (Operation Desert Shield, a bombing offensive against Iraq for supposed violations of UN Security Council Resolutions concerning weapons inspections) as a pretext to distract the nation's attention from the scandal of his 'sexual relations' with White House intern Monica Lewinsky.

The Vietnam War and its Legacies

Near the beginning of his inaugural address, Clinton notes that problems and challenges face the US. Primarily these are articulated as economic in nature but, like

Bush, he highlights that there are both domestic and international causes and consequences:

> a generation raised in the shadows of the cold war assumes new responsibilities in a world warmed by the sunshine of freedom but threatened still by ancient hatreds and new plagues. ... Profound and powerful forces are shaking and remaking our world. And the urgent question of our time is whether we can make change our friend and not our enemy. (1993a)

Instead of 'fac[ing] hard truths and tak[ing] strong steps... we have drifted' (1993a), 'drifted without a strong sense of purpose or responsibility or community' (1993b), and 'that drifting has eroded our resources, fractured our economy, and shaken our confidence' (1993a). Government is partly to blame, for it has 'often has seemed paralyzed by special interest groups, by partisan bickering, and by the sheer complexity of our problems' (1993b), and Washington is 'a place of intrigue and calculation [where p]owerful people maneuver for position' (1993a), to the extent that '[t]he values that used to hold us all together seem to be coming apart' (1995a) and 'the confidence of the people who pay our bills in our institutions in Washington is not high. We must restore it' (1993b).

In speeches from the supplementary corpus, Clinton acknowledges the legacy of the Vietnam War in US society: 'Let us continue to disagree, if we must, about the war. But let it not divide us as a people any longer' (1993c). He admits that 'Vietnam has long been a divisive issue for America. It remains so today' (1993d). Specifically, 'the Vietnam war left deep wounds that have yet to heal' (1993d). In his remarks announcing the normalisation of diplomatic relations with Vietnam, he argues that

> This step will also help our own country to move forward on an issue that has separated Americans from one another for too long now. Let the future be our destination. ... This moment offers us the opportunity to bind up our own wounds. ... Whatever divided us before let us consign to the past. Let this moment, in the words of the Scripture, be a time to heal and a time to build. (1995b)

Clinton also discusses the breakdown of US society in 'this new and very demanding era' (1995a), including problems which 'go way beyond the reach of Government.

They're rooted in the loss of values, in the disappearance of work, and the breakdown of our families and our communities' (1994). 'Civil life' is 'suffering in America today. ... The common bonds of community which have been the great strength of our country from its very beginning are badly frayed' (1995a). These problems include the 'failed' welfare system (1995a) and healthcare 'crisis' (1994), as well as broken homes, teen pregnancies and crime, especially violent crime and drugs. Therefore, the 'first challenge is to cherish our children and strengthen America's families' (1996a). In a Memorial Day speech at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., Clinton asks that the US

> do what is necessary to regain control over our destiny as a people here at home, to strengthen our economy and develop the capacities of all of our people, to rebuild our communities and our families where children are raised and character is developed. (1993c)

A 'New Covenant', Based on Old Values

Clinton argues that '[a]s we enter a new era, we need a new set of understandings, not just with Government but, even more important, with one another as Americans' (1995a). He calls this compact the 'New Covenant' (1995a). The New Covenant is 'grounded in a very, very old idea', combining the values of '[r]esponsibility, opportunity, and citizenship' (1995a). It should 'unite us behind a common vision of what's best for our country' (1995a) 'a renewed sense of our national unity and purpose' (Clinton 1993c). The 'new course', the 'new direction' that Clinton envisages for the nation can be found in 'the basic old values that brought us here over the last two centuries: a commitment to opportunity, to individual responsibility, to community, to work, to family, and to faith' (1993b). Clinton believes that, 'for too long and in too many ways, that heritage was abandoned, and our country drifted' (1994). However, '[t]here is nothing wrong with America that cannot be cured by what is right with America' (1993a).

Clinton invokes past figures (e.g., the Founding Fathers, Lincoln and the Civil War and veterans of the Second World War [1993a, 1995a, 1996a]) to demonstrate the ways in which the changes the US is undergoing are still part of its 'heritage' and its founding principles and values (1993a, 1995a). The theme of renewal is prominent in

Clinton's inaugural. In order to 'renew America, we must be bold' (1993a). In his 'unofficial' State of the Union address, Clinton reminds the nation that renewal will come '[i]f we work hard and if we work together, if we rededicate ourselves to creating jobs, to rewarding work, to strengthening our families, to reinventing our Government' (1993b). Government requires a 'rethink', a 'new spirit of innovation' (1993b), 'reform' (1993a), in order to change the perceptions of the American public about politics (1993b).For Clinton, the problems of government and of family breakdown are linked: 'We can't renew our country until we realize that governments don't raise children, parents do' (1994). Renewal must also occur in the US's dealings with the world: 'To renew America, we must meet challenges abroad as well as at home' (1993a) because 'we cannot turn away from our obligation to renew our leadership abroad' (1994). By 1994, Clinton is declaring that '[w]e replaced drift and deadlock with renewal and reform' (1994) and 'we are gaining ground in restoring our fundamental values' (1996a).

These fundamental values are family and civic responsibility (1994). Family is 'the foundation of American life. If we have stronger families, we will have a stronger America' (1996a). The US needs to rediscover its 'great strength', 'our ability to associate with people who were different from ourselves and to work together to find common ground' (1995a). The United States must also 'put aside partisanship and pettiness and pride' (1995a), in order to 'go forward as one America, one nation working together to meet the challenges we face together' (1996a). People must 'put our country first, remembering that regardless of party label, we are all Americans' (1995a). The state of the union is 'growing stronger, but it must be stronger still' (1994). However, the US 'still can't be strong at home unless we're strong abroad' (1995a) and 'we cannot turn away from our obligation to renew our leadership abroad' (1994).

US Moral Leadership and Peace through Strength

US strength in the international sphere involves 'act[ing], with peaceful diplomacy whenever possible, with force when necessary'. Wherever 'our vital interests are challenged or the will and conscience of the international community is defied'

(1993a), 'America must lead' (1996a; see also 1993a). The US 'is and always has been a great and good nation' (1996a), 'a very, very great country' (1995a) on a 'long, heroic journey' (1993a). It 'remain[s] the greatest nation on Earth, the world's strongest economy, the world's only military superpower' (1993b), 'the world's greatest power' (1994). Clinton does offer a caveat: 'Of course, we can't be everywhere. Of course, we can't do everything. ... We must not be the world's policeman. But we can and should be the world's very best peacemaker' (1996a).[23] US leadership in this global struggle contributes to its own security:

> because of our work together, enacting NAFTA, keeping our military strong and prepared, supporting democracy abroad, we have reaffirmed America's leadership, America's engagement. And as a result, the American people are more secure than they were before. (1994; see also 1995a, 1996a)

In its leadership role, the US is a nation which offers 'opportunities' (1993a) and takes 'responsibility' (1993a), which rises to and overcomes 'challenges' (1993a, 1994, 1996a), with 'will' (1993b), 'conviction' (1993a), 'resolve' (1993a) and 'determination' (1993b), a 'steadfast' people in the face of communism (1993a) who are capable of making 'hard choices' (1994) in order 'to focus, to unite, and to act' (1993b), at home and abroad. However, the President also needs bipartisan support from Congress – which he articulates as an exhortation to Congress to *act* – in order to continue to meet these challenges:

> we can outlaw poison gas forever if the Senate ratifies the Chemical Weapons Convention this year. We can intensify the fight against terrorists and organized criminals at home and abroad if Congress passes the antiterrorism legislation I proposed... We can help more people move from hatred to hope all across the world in our own interest if Congress gives us the means to remain the world's leader for peace. (1996a)

Restoring Domestic US Society: Opportunity and Responsibility

The post-Cold War world is an interdependent world in which '[t]here is no longer a clear division between what is foreign and what is domestic' (1993a). Clinton devotes

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[23] This is an almost direct quote from Carter's (1979a) State of the Union address.

large portions of his speeches to dealing with insecurity in domestic US society: 'while Americans are more secure from threats abroad, I think we all know that in many ways we are less secure from threats here at home' (1994). Among the issues that concern him, crime and drugs are identified as key indicators – both causes and consequences – of social breakdown (1994, 1996a). The US has 'seen a stunning and simultaneous breakdown of community, family, and work, the heart and soul of civilized society. This has created a vast vacuum which has been filled by violence and drugs and gangs' (1994).

The key to reversing the negative trends in domestic US society is family and, in particular, parenting: 'I challenge our parents to become their children's first teachers. Turn off the TV. See that the homework is done. And visit your children's classroom. No program, no teacher, no one else can do that for you' (1996a). The 'kinds of parents who can make all the difference' are '[p]arents who know their children's teachers and turn off the television and help with the homework and teach their kids right from wrong' (1994; see also 1995a). Clinton identifies five concerns that weaken the family: domestic violence (1996a), teen pregnancy (1996a), children being born outside of marriage (1995a), absent and unloving fathers (1996a) and the welfare system (1994, 1996a). His response is to

> say to absent parents who aren't paying their child support, "If you're not providing for your children, we'll garnish your wages, suspend your license, track you across State lines, and if necessary, make some of you work off what you owe". (1994)

Clinton wants to change 'the rhetoric of the past into the actions of the present by honoring work and families in every part of our public decision-making' (1993b) and proposes a 'middle class bill of rights, which should properly be called the bill of rights and responsibilities because its provisions only benefit those who are working to educate and raise their children and to educate themselves' (1995a). Parents must 'take responsibility for the children they bring in[to] this world' (1993b, 1995a) because Governments do not raise children, people do' (1995a). He counsels parents that '[n]o matter who you are, how low or high your station in life, it is the most basic human duty of every American to do that job [parenting] to the best of his or her ability' (1996a). A key theme of Clinton's 1995a State of the Union, in particular, is

empowerment: 'Our job here is to expand opportunity, not bureaucracy, to empower people to make the most of their own lives, and to enhance our security here at home and abroad' (1995a). The role of government is 'to empower our citizens through education and training to make the most of their own lives. The spotlight should shine on those who make the right choices for themselves, their families, and their communities' (1995a; see also 1994, 1996a).

Clinton seeks bipartisan support for his 'community empowerment agenda' (1994) since '[t]aking power away from Federal bureaucracies and giving it back to communities and individuals is something everyone should be able to be for' (1995a). The US Government should work 'with all of our citizens through State and local governments, in the workplace, in religious, charitable, and civic associations' (1996a) because '[w]hen Americans work together in their homes, their schools, their churches, their synagogues, their civic groups, their workplace, they can meet any challenge' (1996a) and because 'all of us have a responsibility to help our children to make it and to make the most of their lives and their God-given capacities' (1996a).

Clinton highlights the continuities between President Kennedy's Peace Corps, which 'defined the character of a whole generation of Americans committed to serving people around the world (1993b), and his own proposed AmeriCorps: 'a program of national service to make college loans available to all Americans and to challenge them at the same time to give something back to their country as teachers or police officers or community service workers' (1993b). AmeriCorps is 'the essence of the New Covenant', 'citizenship at its best' (1995a). Clinton also cites Lynn Woolsey, 'who worked her way off welfare to become a Congresswoman from the State of California' (1995a), as 'the best example' of someone who has made the most of the opportunities in her life and combined this with public service and civic responsibility.

US Military, Soldiers and Veterans

The guarantor of US security, and the enforcer of global peace and freedom, is the US military: 'nothing is more important to our security than our Nation's Armed Forces' (1994). Upon assuming the Presidency, Clinton 'pledged that our Nation would

maintain the best equipped, best trained, and best prepared military on Earth. We have, and they are' (1995a; see also 1994, 1993b). The US military is also an exemplar of both ethnic diversity and national unity: Clinton mentions Corporal Gregory Depestre, who

> went to Haiti as part of his adopted country's force to help secure democracy in his native land. And I might add, we must be the only country in the world that could have gone to Haiti and taken Haitian-Americans there who could speak the language and talk to the people. (1995a)

He also quotes Jack Lucas, a veteran of the Second World War, Who said of his service in the Pacific: '"It didn't matter where you were from or who you were, you relied on one another. You did it for your country"' (1995a).

The rhetoric deployed in references to the US military is also indicative of the strong focus on public service in Clinton's speeches: 'America is very, very proud' of its troops (1996a). The 'brave Americans serving our Nation today' (1993a, 1994) are 'called to service in many, many ways' and are 'showing America at its best' (1995a). The counterpart to soldiers' service is a country which honours and supports its military: because '[w]e ask a very great deal of our Armed Forces' (1995a), 'we owe it to the people in uniform to make sure that we adequately provide for the national defense and for their interests and needs' (1993b). Clinton also discusses veterans in the same ways, noting the 'debt' that they are owed (1995a) and thanking the veterans of World War II, in particular: 'I salute your service and so do the American people' (1996a). He recounts Jack Lucas's story, who became the youngest ever Marine to be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor after saving the lives of two fellow soldiers by throwing himself on a grenade during the battle of Iwo Jima. Clinton also refers to three veterans of the Vietnam War who have demonstrated (additional) civic virtue: Barry McCaffrey, who became Clinton's 'drugs czar' in 1996; Richard Dean, who helped to rescue people trapped in the rubble of the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995a, and who also worked without pay during the government shutdown the same year; and Lucius Wright, who works with children from deprived urban areas. These people are 'heroes' (1996a). Lucius Wright has been selected, along with others, to carry the Olympic torch *en route* to Atlanta in 1996, 'not

because they are star athletes but because they are star citizens, community heroes meeting America's challenges. They are our real champions' (1996a).

In speeches from the supplementary corpus, Clinton goes into more detail about veterans of the Vietnam War. He echoes Reagan's comments that the lesson of Vietnam is that

> If the day should come when our service men and women must again go into combat, let us all resolve they will go with the training, the equipment, the support necessary to win, and most important of all, with a clear mission to win. (1993c)

'No-one... disagree[s] about the heroism' of Vietnam veterans (1993c): they 'fought for freedom, brought honor to their communities, loved their country, and died for it' (1993c), 'brave Americans... [with] noble motives' (1995b). Indeed, through his veneration of the veteran, Clinton goes so far as to (attempt to) rearticulate US actions as successful in that conflict: US soldiers 'fought for the freedom and the independence of the Vietnamese people. Today the Vietnamese are independent' (1995b).

Clinton openly discusses the problems veterans face as a result of exposure to Agent Orange: although he describes this suffering as 'unintentionally caused', he also acknowledges that '[f]or years, the Government did not listen' to veterans, who, for more than two decades, 'made the case that exposure to Agent Orange was injuring and killing them long before they left the field of battle, even damaging their children' (1996b). Clinton distinguishes between his own government and previous administrations, arguing that 'we have pressed hard for answers about the effects of Agent Orange and other chemicals used to kill vegetation during the war in Vietnam' and '[w]ith steps taken since 1993, and the important step we are taking today, we are showing that America can listen and act' (1996b), that 'our country can face up to the consequences of our actions; that we will bear responsibility for the harm we do, even when the harm is unintended' (1996b).

Clinton also refers to the POW/MIA issue, again distinguishing between his and previous administrations – 'our own Government has often denied unnecessarily

information about this issue to the American public... They have a right to know, and I intend to ensure they do' (1993d) – and ordering the declassification of relevant documents 'except for a tiny fraction which could still affect our national security' (1993c). Although there is 'strong disagreement' on this issue, '[o]ne of the ways to help the process of healing is to help the friends and families of POW's and MIA's learn the truth' (1993d). In discussing the renormalisation of relations with Vietnam, 'America's highest priority' and 'our policy... must be driven not by commercial interests but by the overriding purpose of achieving further progress toward the fullest possible accounting of our POW/MIAs' (1993d). While, in 1993, '[p]rogress to date is simply not sufficient to warrant any change in our trade embargo or any further steps toward normalization' (1993d), by 1995, 'Hanoi has taken important steps to help us resolve many cases' (1995b), having 'delivered to us hundreds of pages of documents shedding light on what happened to Americans in Vietnam. ... We have reduced the number of so called discrepancy cases... to 55.' (1995b).

In his reference to the 'wounds' caused by Vietnam, and the notion of the country's economy as fractured and government as paralysed, Clinton's representations echo those of Gerald Ford; through his articulation of the US as drifting and 'bickering', Clinton also replicates imagery used by Bush. Both of these aspects of Clinton's rhetoric depict a US that is passive, without drive or direction, damaged, broken not fully able – an emasculated state – and bickering is a particularly feminising (and infantilising) term. Washington, D.C. is a place of 'intrigue' – if not corrupt, certainly not a forthright, honourable model of masculinity – and Congress is again depicted as passive. Clinton's articulation of US strength as predicated upon a return to family values, however – using the language of regaining control, innovation and rebuilding – remasculinises both the citizen/head-of-household and the body politic as a whole. He attaches the same masculine predicates to the US as previous presidents: 'will', 'conviction', 'resolve', 'steadfastness' and 'determination'. People are encouraged to make 'choices', pursue 'opportunities', take 'responsibility' and overcome 'challenges' – very much a bourgeois-rational masculine model of citizen-worker. The good citizen is also a good father, who is engaged in his children's upbringing. Clinton also deploys the gendered 'metaphors of movement, activity, and progress' (Murphy

2002: 240), as well as those used by his predecessors: hardness (implicitly opposed to softness) and light (explicitly opposed to darkness).

While Clinton uses gender-neutral and gender-inclusive language to describe US military personnel, the veterans he mentions are all male and the World War II veteran he quotes to emphasise both patriotism and unity/bonding as valued attributes, which should be replicated throughout civilian society, are clearly masculinised. While reiterating Carter's depiction of Vietnam veterans as victims – of both the Vietnamese (as POW/MIAs) and of the US government (through the use of Agent Orange) – for Clinton, as for Reagan, these men are nevertheless strong, courageous 'noble' 'heroes', who were held back by a feminised nation and prevented from winning the war in Vietnam. Clinton also masculinises his own administration by juxtaposing the actions taken with previous administrations' inaction on these issues.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have described and analysed the various constructions of US identity, of the US military, of soldiers and of Vietnam veterans, and representations of the Vietnam War, as articulated by US presidents since the end of that conflict. Across the five presidents, and despite the varied political platforms of each, there is a high degree of uniformity in their rhetoric and representations: Vietnam is acknowledged as divisive and traumatic, as a wound from which the US needs to recover, and US society is in crisis, partly caused by Vietnam and (perhaps more importantly) by the reactions thereto, a crisis which can only be resolved by national unity and (masculine) action. Each president articulates their prescription as both 'new' and a return to old values. The same gendered predicates (articulations) and subject-positions (interpellations) appear again and again in relation to US identity – for example, the binary metaphors of light/dark, hard/soft, forward/backward, and action/passivity. On this last point, Congress, in particular, is often feminised as passive. In international terms, the US remains strong, benign, defensive and peaceful (in opposition to an aggressive and brutal, hypermasculine enemy). The US's position as global leader is ensured by its strong, noble and honourable military. The

project of remasculinisation undertaken by each president varies slightly – for Reagan, it is connected with the frontier, innovation and enterprise, for Bush and Clinton, it is connected with fatherhood and a more caring (albeit still very masculine) citizenry – but is always tied to the valorisation of military personnel and, specifically, with the noble, courageous, patriotic Vietnam veteran.

Having analysed the representations in presidential speeches, in chapters 4, 5 and 6, I provide critical readings of the representations of US identity, the Vietnam War, and its soldiers and veterans, in films from the 1970s (*The Deer Hunter*), the 1980s (*Rambo: First Blood, Part II*) and the 1990s (*Forrest Gump*), before returning to the intertextual analysis of presidential rhetoric in conjunction with these films in chapter 7.

Chapter 4: *The Deer Hunter*

Introduction

Along with *Coming Home*, *Go Tell the Spartans*, *Good Guys Wear Black*, *Who'll Stop the Rain* and *The Boys in Company C*, all released in 1978, and *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *The Deer Hunter* was part of the 'first wave' of films that attempted to deal with the war and its aftermath. Even then, the path from script to screen was not a straightforward one for *The Deer Hunter*: the director, Michael Cimino, had to turn to British company EMI to finance the film (DVD commentary, 2003).[1] Moreover, Cimino's request for production assistance from the US Army was rejected because of the script's 'technical and historical errors' (Suid 2002: 359); the Army recommended that '"the producer employ a researcher who either knows or is willing to learn something about Vietnam"' (US Army memo quoted in Suid 2002: 359).

In the first section of this chapter, I situate the film in the cultural context of its release, discussing the extensive critical engagement with *The Deer Hunter* by reviewers. Thereafter, the analysis proceeds in three parts, in which I provide three interpretations of the film's motifs. In the first of these analytical sections, I discuss *The Deer Hunter* as a vehicle for male bonding and male homosocial and homosexual relationships. I build upon this theme in the next section, examining John Hellmann's (1982, 1986) reading of the film's portrayal of 'Vietnam as Western', and of its central character, Michael as the masculine Western hero, and interrogating *The Deer Hunter*'s deployment of the Western's generic conventions in its exploration of US identity in and after Vietnam. In the final section, I examine these conventions as they apply to the gendered representational and binary narrative structures operationalised in the film. I argue that Hellmann's account of the film (as offering a critical reworking of the conventional Western narrative) is less persuasive when one

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[1] It should be noted that historian Lawrence Suid (2002: 352-6) provides an entirely different account of how the screenplay was written and made into a film, in which the Russian roulette motif was develop by Quinn Redeker and Lou Garfinkle as early as 1974, and Cimino was hired by EMI to direct Redeker and Garfinkle's screenplay, despite his initial desire to cut the Russian roulette scenes entirely.

interrogates the gendered dynamics of the film's narrative structure. I agree with Hellmann that the film offers some openings in which the potential for the destabilisation of US identity (as built upon the Western myth) can be identified. However, the film remains structured around a fairly conventional deployment of gendered binaries. In particular, the final scene of the film, in which the feminine symbolically penetrates a previously masculine space, does not offer as profound a challenge to US identity as may first appear.

Relevant Context: The Film's Reception

To be eligible for consideration for the Academy Awards, *The Deer Hunter* was released on a small scale in Los Angeles and New York in December 1978, which were packed-out events (Chong 2005: 89), before receiving a nationwide release in 1979.[2] The film was at first advertised not through television previews but, rather, through positive reviews, which were distributed in order to promote the film as a '"high class event"' in which '"the goal was to create a special quality about the picture"' (Donahue quoted in Katzman 1993: 222). The publicity brochure included with *Variety* magazine referred to *The Deer Hunter* as '"one of the most controversial and important films of 1979"' (quoted in McInerney 1979-80: 30), while the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner* banner headline upon the film's release read '"The War Finally Wins"' (Auster and Quart 1988: 79). Vietnam veterans and other groups picketed the film during the Academy Awards show because of its racist imagery (Katzman 1993: 222; Suid 2002: 358). *The Deer Hunter* won the Academy Award for Best Picture (which was presented by John Wayne at the ceremony), as well as those for Directing (Michael Cimino), Film Editing and Sound.[3] Christopher Walken won the Oscar for Best Supporting Actor and Robert De Niro and Meryl Streep were also nominated (for Best Actor and Best Supporting Actress, respectively). The film picked up other nominations for Cinematography (Vilmos Zsigmond) and Screenplay Written Directly for the Screen (AMPAS, no date).

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[2] The studio wanted a much shorter cut of the film than the director originally produced, so Cimino deliberately had the shorter version of the film interrupted during previews, so that audiences would give it a bad review and the studio would accept the release of the longer version (DVD commentary).

[3] John Wayne directed and starred in his own Vietnam War film, *The Green Berets*, in 1968.

Despite (or perhaps because of) winning several Oscars and the New York Critics Award, reviewers were polarised in their evaluation. Some were effusively positive about the film, and even the critics acknowledged its force, calling it 'a powerful experience' (Callenbach 1979: 18) with masterful performances (Kinder 1979: 13), '"*the* great film of 1978"' (Knight quoted in Suid 2002: 356, original emphasis). Cimino's great accomplishment was to make a film 'in touch with the collective unconscious of the mass audience' (Fiedler 1990: 395), that dealt with the 'the raw nerve in the national psyche' (Greene 1984-5: 29), namely, the US public's post-Vietnam need to express their nostalgia for this lost era, to experience the trauma and catharsis, and find some sort of national redemption (Kranz 1980).

What reviewers also picked up on was the 176-minute epic's structure – or lack of one: despite its power, the film was seen as 'fatally oversimplified' (Axeen 1979: 17), 'sprawling and incoherent' (Eberwein 1980: 352), 'haphazardly thrown together from a plot standpoint' (Callenbach 1979: 18), '[v]ast, powerful, muddled, sketchy, moving, confused' (Dempsey 1979: 10). In particular, the wedding and reception section was criticised for its purposeless meandering (12). *The Deer Hunter* 'is widely regarded as lacking structure' (Wood 2003: 245). By the time of the Academy Awards, one journalist was to note, with perhaps unintended irony, that, when *The Deer Hunter* was announced as Best Picture, '"it was as if you had proposed to a girl and were horrified that she had accepted. I had the peculiar feeling that – if the ballots had gone out one week later – *The Deer Hunter* wouldn't have won"' (Harmetz quoted in Suid 2002: 358).[4]

Critics also disagreed about the film's purpose and effect. Research undertaken by Ryan and Kellner (2002 [1988]) suggested that US audiences

> tended to turn even conservative war films like *The Deer Hunter* into antiwar statements: 69% felt that it portrayed the Vietnam war as a mistake, and 93% said that it confirmed their opposition to the war. The ending made 27% feel patriotic, while it made 51% feel disheartened. (205)

[4] The statement is ironic insofar as this is exactly what happens in the film itself, when Nick asks Linda to marry him during the wedding reception, only to attempt a clumsy retraction of his proposal when she accepts.

One critic called it '"the greatest antiwar movie since *The Grand Illusion*"' (Farber quoted in Kinder 1979: 13) and, by some accounts, Cimino himself claimed he was making 'an antiwar statement' (Axeen 1979: 17). Michael Dempsey concurred: '*The Deer Hunter* is not pro-Vietnam; its portrayal of the war's disasters and agonies is too ferociously, yet sorrowfully graphic for that' (1979: 11). For Fiedler, the film is essentially anti-war and anti-violence because 'the hunter on the hill is last shown not shooting the deer in his sights', (1990: 395). On the other hand, Cimino rejects the notion that *The Deer Hunter* is a war film altogether, arguing that 'it is not meant to be a Vietnam movie, it never was... it's not about combat even' (DVD commentary).

Reviewers returned again and again to accusations of racism levelled against the film. Rejecting Peter Arnett's critique that the film was '"fascist trash"' and dishonest and racist in its portrayal of the Vietnamese, Rick Berg (1990: 60) rebuked Arnett for wanting a realistic and historically accurate film that mirrored what the 'liberal reporter' had seen while 'in country'[5] and argued that 'what Arnett failed to comment on in his defence of the Vietnamese was that this film was less about Vietnam and more about the American community that fought the war' (60). Although Berg sees the film as a vulgar, brutal (rather than a romantic, idyllic) portrayal of working class immigrant life, the film 'should be understood within its cinematic context: it is not an attempt to reiterate the shoddy values of a hollow patriotism. What we see is a community shattered by Vietnam, trying to express a deeply rooted nationalism, with all its ironies and contradictions' (61). *The Deer Hunter* has been praised as 'a powerful and visually striking evocation of working-class GIs traumatized by the war' (Auster and Quart 1988: 129). In this sense, the film was viewed as an anti-war statement that avoided denigrating the sacrifices of the working class in that war. For John Hellmann, accusations of racism are inaccurate because

> Vietnamese are shown among the victims of the Viet Cong in the Russian roulette scene, a black American soldier without arms in the military hospital is one of the most vivid statements against the war in the film, and white

[5] 'In country' is how soldiers and journalists referred to (being in) Vietnam (Santoli 1982: 230).

> Americans are prominently shown placing bets in the final Russian roulette scene. (Hellmann 1982: 421)

Despite these sympathetic comments, however, for most reviewers, the depictions of the Vietnamese and the evacuation of any discussion of the broader politics of the Vietnam War and any contextualisation of US intervention meant that *The Deer Hunter* was a conservative and reactionary film. Critics argued that Cimino's representation of the Vietnam War was naïve, jingoistic and unrealistic in the extreme, a distortion of history, and the portrayals of the Vietnamese as vicious, sadistic, evil savages, 'bestial brutes', were denounced as xenophobic.[6] Apparently, even Robert De Niro regretted how far Cimino had decontextualised the war (Paris in Muse 1994: 308). The Russian roulette sequence, in particular, caused the greatest controversy, being viewed as 'improbable, implausible, absurd' (Fiedler 1990: 394), 'exploitational and gratuitously violent' (Rider 2003: 33), 'created... out of a fantasy' (Katzman 1993: 223). Wood sums up *The Deer Hunter*'s ambiguity thus:

> As in almost every other Hollywood film about Vietnam... political analysis is totally repressed and the possibility that it [the war] might be regarded as a war of American aggression/imperialism never permitted to surface. (It should be added, in fairness, that the film never attempts to justify the war in political terms either and that the America that insisted on fighting it is nowhere endorsed). (Wood 2003: 242, parentheses in original, text in brackets added)

One of the most debated points about the film is its realism. Some critics wished to dismiss the film based on its factual inaccuracies, while others praised it for its carefully nuanced and detailed reflection of everyday life in a small steel town. On the DVD commentary, Cimino takes pains to explain the lengths to which he went to ensure that the film feels authentic (including using local townspeople for the wedding and reception scenes), explaining that his way of making the film was to 'create the reality and do a documentary about the characters'. He used real beer and real food in the wedding reception scenes, and the local townspeople even brought real, wrapped, wedding gifts. However, Cimino invokes 'authenticity' as a guiding principle in a very different way when it comes to the feel of the movie and

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[6] See Callenbach 1979: 19; Dempsey 1979: 11; Kinder 1979; Kranz 1980; Greene 1984-5: 37; Auster and Quart 1988: 72; Walsh and Aulich 1989: 2; Corrigan 1991: 14-15; Katzman 1993: 223; McCrisken and Pepper 2005: 198.

the visual spectacle for which he was striving – recreating the bar, the trailer and the log cabin many hundreds of miles from their 'originals', 'defoliating' all of the trees around the trailer so that summer could be made to look like autumn, and filming part of the supposedly Russian-American town in an all-black neighbourhood. The film was shot in a total of seven different cities and four different states (Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Washington). The choice of powerfully symbolic landscape over verisimilitude extends to the hunting scenes: although the film is set in the Alleghenies, the scenes were filmed in the snow-topped craggy mountains of the Rockies, a far cry from the gently rolling green hills that form this particular part of the Appalachians (Callenbach 1979; Dempsey 1979).

It is important to distinguish between realism as historical "accuracy" and realism as a cinematic construct: this allows us to characterise *The Deer Hunter* 'as a realistic film without this committing us to any claims about its factual veracity' (Wood 2003: 243). This 'reality effect' is created through a variety of filmic mechanisms (244-5):

- encouraging audience identification with sympathetic characters and commonly experienced emotions;
- suturing the spectator into dramatic situations (e.g., use of point-of-view shots, lack of contemplative distance);
- the physicality of the film's depictions (e.g., the conditions the three Americans experience in captivity; Steven's loss of limbs);
- the spontaneous, naturalistic (method) acting;
- the sheer weight of the superfluous detail (e.g., the opening wedding and reception sequences, the longest section of the film).

As Naomi Greene puts it, US films' power lies in 'recreating the *feel and climate* of certain experiences (such as the horror of war which comes through in *The Deerhunter* [sic]), in presenting *believable* and even ordinary people... who find themselves in extraordinary situations' (1984-5: 30, emphasis added).

Cimino discusses the combat and captivity scenes in the DVD commentary, highlighting that no stuntmen were involved in the making of the film, and that even the dirt and grime on the three principal actors is 'real' (they lived in their costumes,

without showering, for a month).[7] Specifically, Cimino rejects the notion that the Russian roulette scenes are racist: 'It's absurd to talk about racism, it's not about race, this is ridiculous, absolutely ridiculous, I mean, they could be anything, they could be Eskimos, it doesn't matter'.[8] He argues that Russian roulette is a metaphorical device that allows him to explore 'the conditions of life', the notion of survival and 'the sense of being in a completely foreign and unknown country'. He proudly notes that, other than the three principals, no professional actors are used in the Russian roulette scenes, and that the authenticity of this sequence comes from using ordinary people. In fact, at one point, Cimino claims not only that they are not actors but that they are not *acting*, which can hardly have been the case, unless the film crew allowed the cast to use real bullets and to bet on the outcome.

Michael Shapiro rejects the notion that the film should be critiqued (primarily) for its (lack of) factual veracity:

> apparently it must be emphasized that *The Deer Hunter* is a feature film, i.e., it is a fictional genre, not a documentary. That its mountain scenes are not faithful to the Pennsylvania landscape or that the Russian roulette imposed on American and South Vietnamese prisoners by the Viet Cong "never actually happened in Vietnam" are irrelevant to an interpretation of their significance in the film. (Dempsey quoted in Shapiro 2003: 112)

Nevertheless, the fact that the film depicts Russian roulette at all, and, by extension, represents the North Vietnamese soldiers as forcing US soldiers to play, *despite* its lack of any basis in "historical fact", is not irrelevant to an analysis of the significance of these scenes for the film. Suid notes that 'no evidence exists that any [US] POWs ever played any form of Russian roulette while in captivity. Nor did such a betting game exist in Vietnam' (2002: 357), notwithstanding Cimino's claims that he receives letters from people – most recently from a journalist in 2003 – 'confirming' that

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[7] Cimino implies that the Vietnam scenes were to some extent based on his own experiences as a medic with the Green Berets, although he states that he never saw any action, in Vietnam or elsewhere. However, the veracity of Cimino's claims concerning his military experience has been the subject of some controversy on the internet (Wikipedia, no date b; see also Suid 2002: 352-60).

[8] What Cimino does not explicitly reflect upon is whether the film could have been set entirely in the US; that is, his comments appear to imply that although the precise nationality/ethnicity of the 'Other' could be different, the 'Other' must still be foreign (i.e., non-US).

Russian roulette is '*still* being played' (emphasis added) on the Vietnamese-Laotian border.[9] Moreover, *The Deer Hunter* is the only account of the Vietnam War that depicts this activity. Thus, the primary reason why anyone might believe that Russian roulette was played in Vietnam at all – and some critics and reviewers did claim that such a game was '"a parlor sport of some sort"' in Vietnam (Kroll quoted in Suid 2002: 357) – is most likely entirely due to *The Deer Hunter*. Audiences with little or no prior knowledge of the Vietnam War, and especially those who have no background or formal training in film analysis, could be forgiven for 'believing that they are being offered factual information rather than mythology' (Wood 2003: 244) or allegory.

More generally, Kinder astutely comments that, although '[s]ome suggest the battle scenes could have been from any war... the fact is Cimino chose Vietnam and a realistic mode of representation' (1979: 14), such that 'audiences and critics did perceive that... the film was making a comment not on war but on the Vietnam War' (Suid 2002: 356). Of the audience surveyed by Ryan and Kellner, '74 percent felt that the representation of the Vietcong in the film was accurate' (2002: 292).[10] As Wood notes – and himself demonstrates (see below) – 'the *sense* of confusion [that the film deliberately creates] becomes, for the audience, a dangerous *actual* confusion as to what exactly is happening' (2003: 242, original emphasis).

A scene which exemplifies the confusion that *The Deer Hunter* engenders is the opening Vietnam sequence, approximately an hour into the film. In this scene, an Asian man in military uniform throws a grenade into a bunker full of frightened Vietnamese civilians, before ruthlessly and mercilessly gunning down an injured mother and infant (also Vietnamese). Almost immediately, the Asian soldier is burnt alive by Michael. The confusion about what is happening in the film, and about what 'really' happened in the Vietnam War, is evident in the ways in which scholars have read this scene. Michael Dempsey asks, 'besides killing an ARVN [South Vietnamese] soldier for wantonly murdering a peasant family, what else has he [Michael] done in

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[9] Cimino fails to specify by whom it is being played, or to reflect on whether this might not have been inspired by the film itself.

[10] It is not entirely clear whether the Vietnamese portrayed in the initial combat sequence and the later captivity scenes are (Southern Vietnamese) members of the National Liberation Front (Viet Cong) or North Vietnamese Army regulars, although these two military organisations were often subsumed under the term Viet Cong by many Americans.

battle?' (Dempsey 1979: 13). More explicitly, Robin Wood (2003) posits that the American helicopter seen destroying the village with napalm, and the American soldier's presence there, imply that the raid is being carried out on a North Vietnamese village (presumably he comes to this conclusion because North Vietnam was the US's 'official' enemy) and that the Asian soldier must therefore (again) be South Vietnamese.

However, although the helicopter is indeed American, the Vietnam War was not fought (in a land-based-combat sense) on North Vietnamese territory. It is testament to the ambiguity of the 'real' war that this scene is so comprehensively misinterpreted – even by academics with a particular interest (and apparent expertise) in assessing the veracity of filmic representations. I read this scene as occurring in *South* Vietnam, with a North Vietnamese Army (NVA) soldier as the 'villain'. The soldier is seen signalling his comrades just before he is killed, thus accounting for the capture of the three American soldiers and their subsequent scenes in the NVA prison hut.

What the discussion thus far highlights is that *The Deer Hunter* 'is multivalent politically' (Ryan and Kellner 2002: 287). Debates about the film have often tended to be highly polarised around the issues mentioned above, yet it is impossible to do justice to the complexity of the film in an account which examines only its (supposed) anti-Vietnamese racism or its anti-war credentials. In the next three sections, I reflect on the themes of male bonding, the generic conventions of the Western as deployed in the film, and a specifically gendered examination of the film's Western narrative structure.

Male Bonding

As other commentators have observed, and Cimino himself has asserted, 'the real project of the film is to examine male friendship under pressure', 'the communal rituals of "the boys"' (Callenbach 1979: 19; Auster and Quart 1988: 62; DVD commentary). *The Deer Hunter*'s temporal and geographic setting is 'merely the occasion for announcing the primacy of the bonds between men' (Jeffords 1989: 99).

Callenbach concurs, remarking that the Vietnam War 'does not really interest Cimino. ... What interests Cimino is men and guns. The war is window-dressing' (1979: 19). Other than Steven, whose mother is shown in two brief scenes in the opening section of the film, none of the male characters in *The Deer Hunter* appears to have any family in Clairton, so their central relationships are with each other, and 'Cimino never cares to explore the adolescent nature of that bonding or how it shapes their relationships with women' (Auster and Quart 1988: 63). Even Linda, the most prominent female character in the film, functions primarily as an indication of the depth of the love between the two central male characters. Indeed, the film 'remains absolutely fixed on male rituals and friendship' and the men's relationships with women are just a backdrop to the unfolding drama (62). Cimino argues that the film is 'about growing up, creating a family when you have no family, a family of friends is as valuable as any family created by blood' (DVD commentary).

The film is structured around two promises: Steven and Angela's wedding vows and Michael's promise to Nick not to leave him in Vietnam. Although Angela and Linda are both initially positioned as virginal and innocent (Angela is getting married, Linda is beaten by her drunk father, whom she looks after), both are shown to be promiscuous, by Angela's pre-marital pregnancy (and Steven's wedding-night confession that he has never slept with Angela) and Linda's quick transition from being engaged to Nick to sleeping with Michael. Thereafter, we see Angela and Steven's marriage in tatters, while Michael leaves Linda to go back to Vietnam in an attempt to rescue Nick. Thus, the feminised promise (marriage/relationship) is subordinated and ultimately rejected in favour of the masculine bond (Michael's promise to Nick). This masculine bond 'determines/overdetermines the film, by its insistent and anxious exclusion of the feminine' (Jeffords 1989: 97), in the hunts, the drinking and the war. Needless to say, the women are included in none of these bonding rituals. In an early scene in the bar, after the group have finished work for the day, they sing raucously, but when the same song is played at the wedding – an obviously feminised space – there is no singing.

The focus on male friendships can be read as going beyond a platonic representation of heterosexual homosociality, despite Cimino's vociferous denials on the DVD:

Feeney: Critics, at the time this movie came out, didn't know how to handle the, uh, the beautiful sort of intimacy between these guys, which is, you know, not sexual but is very simply emotional

Cimino: Oh, it's absurd to talk about sexual, I mean, that's ridiculous

Feeney: Well, it is absurd, but people, as I say, couldn't handle it at the time, but now, I think, actually, again this is where I think you were ahead of the time, because people now can understand and look at a movie where two guys are this relaxed with each other and just this comfortable in their own skins, you know?

Cimino: They're not – they, they love each other, they love each other, they're friends, they're buddies, they'll give up their lives for each other, that's not sex

Feeney: No... no...

Cimino: Ridiculous[11]

Although *The Deer Hunter* is 'not *merely* a subliminally erotic buddy picture' (Callenbach 1979: 21, emphasis added), a persuasive reading of the subtext concerning the homosexual (or bisexual) nature of the relationship between Michael and Nick is not difficult to construct: the ways in which Michael and Nick's relationship is framed as a homosexual love story 'takes clear precedence over the heterosexual romance' (Wood 2003: 260). The decision to begin the end-credits with a shot of Nick rather than Michael (given that Michael is the central character), permits a retrospective reading of the film in which Nick becomes its centre, and putting Michael's role as the hero into a different context (263).

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[11] Cimino seems to identify heavily with the character of Michael, intimating that this is why the director gave his name to the main character, and frequently referring to elements in the film as reminiscent of his own life and experiences: 'my feeling about this movie is that it's a home movie. I feel like I'm watching a home movie that I shot of guys I know... like I'm watching a movie of my past, not a movie that I made' (DVD commentary). Specifically, Christopher Walken's character in the film, Nikanor Chevotarevich, is named after a real-life friend of Cimino's, for whom Cimino was best man at his Russian Orthodox wedding. This may in part explain his reluctance to admit a queer reading of the film. As outlined in chapter 2, however, Cimino's intention, while socially privileged (according to dominant discourses about who is interpellated to speak with author-ity about the 'meaning' of a film), is only one of many possible interpretations of the film's meaning(s).

In this reading, the scene where Michael strips and runs away from the wedding, and the subsequent promise which Nick asks Michael to make, is tantamount to a 'secular wedding' (Britton in Wood 2003: 262).[12] Perhaps more overtly, while in Saigon, Nick mistakes a man on the street for Michael, a common trope in Hollywood cinema that typically signifies pining separated lovers (264). In this homosexual love story, Linda functions simply as mediator: 'the men make love to her because they are barred from making love to each other' (260). In this context, Nick's suicide occurs because, although Michael has ostensibly come to rescue him, Nick 'has recognized that Mike offers nothing but a return to [heteronormative] repression' (265).

This reading of *The Deer Hunter* as critically subversive of heteronormative American values is undermined in the film. While Nick, 'in relation to the oppositional structure of the masculine and feminine in *The Deer Hunter* might seem at first to be a deconstruction of that polarity offered by the film', his death represents the need to eradicate ambiguity in favour of perpetuating existing, rigidly gendered, dichotomies (Jeffords 1989: 100). Although Nick is portrayed as an androgynous figure, a male who possesses feminine attributes, including his physical appearance, his interest in other men's physical appearance, his passivity, emotionality and his love for 'trees' over hunting, 'the overt presentation and punishment of Nick's role in the film suggests that such androgynous positions are not only destructive but must themselves be destroyed' (100).

I return to arguments about the role of the feminine in *The Deer Hunter* below. First, however, I discuss Hellmann's (1982, 1986) sympathetic account of the film's reworking of the Western myth, laying out the ways in which *The Deer Hunter* can be read as a Western and how it both conforms to and subverts the Western's generic conventions.

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[12] Michael and Nick already live together.

Vietnam as Western[13]

The Western influences on *The Deer Hunter* are clearly visible and a number of intertextual citations with works in the Western genre have been identified in relation to the film.[14] Its title references James Fenimore Cooper's (1962 [1841]) fifth novel about the character Natty Bumppo, *The Deerslayer*.[15] The film also contains visual references to a scene from one of Cooper's earlier novels, *The Pioneers* (1959 [1823]), in which Bumppo and others kill a deer in a lake (Slotkin 1992: 761 n.28). The US POW storyline draws on seventeenth and eighteenth-century Indian captivity narratives in the United States,[16] a common theme in the classic Western films, and, in the DVD commentary, Cimino frequently invokes the legacy of Western film-maker John Ford.[17]

The Deer Hunter contains many of the Western's characteristic narrative elements: 'male bonding, the repressed love of the hero for a "good woman," the terror of confrontation with savage denizens of a hostile landscape, dancehall girls, even a "shoot-out" across a table in a crowded gambling room' (Hellmann 1982: 420). The Western has traditionally dealt with specifically US historical and cultural experiences, namely, 'the flight from community (Europe, the East, restraint, the conscious) into a wilderness (America, the West, freedom, the unconscious)' (419). Like *The Green Berets* before it, *The Deer Hunter* invokes the mythic themes of the classic Western: masculinity; the relationship between the individual and the community/civilisation; and the relationship between the hero and the symbolic

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[13] This section draws heavily on John Hellmann's analysis.

[14] In addition to Western references, another intertextual allusion concerns an image from the Vietnam War: Sylvia Shin Huey Chong argues that *The Deer Hunter* 'displaced the Vietnamese depicted in Eddie Adams's famous photograph, *Saigon Execution*, and recentered the narrative on Americans as victims' (2005: 1; see also Franklin 2000: 14-22; Suid 2002: 357-8).

[15] Bumppo is also known as Hawkeye and Leatherstocking. These nicknames refer to his hunting abilities and his animal-skin clothing. Cooper's other novels are entitled *The Last of the Mohicans* (1953 [1826]), *The Prairie* (1950 [1827]) and *The Pathfinder* (1981 [1840]).

[16] A number of captivity narratives circulated in the US during this period, the common theme of which was the abduction of white settlers by Native Americans, thus 'proving' for the colonists the fundamental savagery of the indigenous peoples (Slotkin 1992: 14; Holsinger 1999: 11).

[17] Director of, among others, the classic Western films, *Stagecoach* (1939), *Rio Grande* (1950), *The Searchers* (1956) and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962).

frontier landscape/the wilderness (Russell 2002: 41; Hellmann 1982: 419). Balancing 'the need to establish order with violence against the paradoxical need for civilized men to eschew violence' (Muse 1994: 308), the Western is conventionally structured around the binaries 'good and evil (hero versus outlaw, lawmen versus rustlers, cavalry versus Indians, noble Indian tribes versus threatening tribes)' (Hellmann 1982: 423). These binaries are visible in *The Deer Hunter*'s narrative, which depicts a 'violent confrontation between the conscious and unconscious, civilization and wilderness, played out in the white imagination as a struggle between light and dark' (421).

The Western's binary structure and themes are apposite in the context of Vietnam because they provide Cimino with 'the strengths of the central [US] national myth in dealing with Vietnam as a collective American trauma' (420). The American myth centres on regeneration through violence, on 'one who had defeated and freed himself from both the "savage" of the western wilderness and the metropolitan regime of authoritarian politics and class privilege' (Slotkin: 1992: 11; see also Lawrence and Jewett 2002: 111-13). Cimino himself affirms a reading of the film through the prism of American myth, acknowledging the importance of myth to life in general, as well as to contemporary US society: 'traditions and myth are what make life bearable... myths, religion, tradition are ways of making life tolerable' (DVD commentary). He states that the film is about

> the danger that lurks in the world, the tests that await everyone who is living who chooses to step out into the world; if you go out into the world you are going to face danger of one kind or another; if you want to sit in the post office for twenty-five years and collect your pension and buy a rec – an RV [recreational vehicle] – and go roast hotdogs in Yosemite and watch Phil Donahue at night on the TV with twenty other people in RVs, that's one thing; if you wanna go out into what Don Rumsfeld calls the tough big world, some bad shit can happen. (DVD commentary, 2003)

Hellmann argues that *The Deer Hunter* fundamentally inverts many of the Western's cultural codes. Specifically, he claims that the notion of regeneration through violence 'is stood on its head [in the film], for the regeneration results from *the response of the hero to violence turned back on him*' (1982: 429, emphasis added) rather than through violence enacted by the hero. However, while it may be the case

that *The Deer Hunter* presents an inversion of the traditional white superiority narrative of the Western, it is not at all clear that this inversion necessarily undermines the myth's function, since the inversion leaves intact the binary structure upon which the narrative is constructed. Furthermore, the racial basis of these binaries is almost identical to the traditional (non-inverted) Western themes, and the ultimate regeneration of the community as attempted, or indicated, in the final scene of *The Deer Hunter* can be argued to effect a re-inversion and restoration of the myth. However, before critiquing Hellman's interpretation, it is necessary to unpack his argument that *The Deer Hunter* offers an inversion of the Western myth.

As Robert McKeever notes, one of the most important aspects of the Western is the figure of the protagonist – the quintessence of the traditional white male American hero. It is worth quoting McKeever at length:

> the hero is always at the centre of the narrative structure and, indeed, usually controls it; he is endowed with exceptional, almost superhuman, abilities in gun-play and other forms of violence; he is sexually potent, as evidenced by his great attractiveness to women, though he often rejects permanent relationships with women for the risk they constitute to his heroic will and abilities; and he is morally justified by both his personal triumph over his adversary and by the restoration to the community on whose behalf he acts of the moral and social order that was under threat. (1989: 46)

In *The Deer Hunter*, Michael Vronsky is our lonely hero, who, as the film unfolds, is shown to embody almost all of these elements.[18] He is the centre of the narrative, and although we occasionally follow other characters for a short time, we always return to Michael. As Cimino notes, 'this is the pack and Bob [De Niro] is clearly the alpha wolf' (DVD commentary).

The town of Clairton ('light town') represents both European tradition and modern industrialisation (Hellmann 1982: 421) – in short, civilisation. In IR terms, Clairton also functions as the locus of the domestic sphere. Michael is on the border between civilisation and nature (421), living on the fringes of the community, in a trailer on the

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[18] Michael's 'sexual potency' is not explicitly demonstrated but is certainly implied, despite his friend Stash's allegations to the contrary.

edge of town. He is awkward in social settings (when talking to Linda and when expected to dance at the wedding), and looks much more at ease when on his own, in particular when hunting, where he demonstrates a clear sense of self-reliance. He appears, at least initially, to be celibate, rejecting Stash's overtures to find him a girl, and reacts in an extreme way to learning about Angela's pre-marital promiscuity (stripping naked and running away), although there are also signs of repressed chivalrous passion for Linda during the reception (422). However, Michael does not pursue Linda in the manner of a traditional Hollywood romance, and appears to reject a permanent relationship with her. Like Cooper's Deerslayer before him, Michael is chaste and pure of purpose.

Michael is estranged from the community 'by his alienation from its corruption and by his strict adherence to a personal code ['one shot'] closely associated with the uncorrupted wilderness and its original inhabitants' (421). In keeping with the Western's generic conventions, Michael (like the Deerslayer) is associated with the land and with Native American skills and traditions, both narratively and visually: he invokes the legend of Indian 'sun dogs' (an optical phenomenon creating a halo effect around the sun) as an auspicious omen for hunting. Michael's flight from this domestic(ated) community leads him to enlist in the Army Airborne Rangers, whose historical lineage is associated both with frontiersman and Native American martial practices and with the wars against Native Americans. His appearance in the initial combat scene in Vietnam includes camouflage paint and bandana (424).[19]

Vietnam represents the frontier, the wilderness outside civilisation (in IR terms, the international sphere, outside or beyond the state), ostensibly the opposite of Clairton's domesticity. The abrupt cut from the sombre post-hunt mood in the bar in Clairton to US helicopters napalming a village in the Indochinese jungle, presents 'a nightmare inversion of the landscape and its relation to the hero and community' (423). This is also indicated through the contrasting mise-en-scène of the two places: during the first deer hunt, Michael is shot from below, as a powerful figure in control, while in Vietnam he is framed by downward-angled shots. There is a stark contrast between the snowy mountains and the tropical Southeast Asian jungle, and between

[19] Not dissimilar to Sylvester Stallone in the later *Rambo* films.

the Clairton steel mill which harnesses fire to make steel and the military helicopters which harness steel (bombs) to make fire (napalm). The jungle and the 'savage' Viet Cong invert 'the American forests and beautiful deer' (426). Another inversion: 'Michael and his friends found satisfaction in hunting and gutting a deer; now pigs fight over the entrails of dead American soldiers' in the opening Vietnam scene (423).

Although Michael acts as the traditional Western hero, responding to the murderous NVA/NLF soldier by 'literally purging him from the earth with fire' – a scene which 'classically parallels the image of the frontier hero protecting innocent settlers by killing savage Indians' (424) – the inversion of the Western myth is prefigured in Michael's inability to save the Vietnamese woman and child. US firepower is also shown to be (at best) impotent in deterring or preventing the Vietnamese soldier's violent actions and also as a violent force itself. [20] Hence, '*both* the "evil" North Vietnamese *and* the "good" American helicopters act out the repressed hatreds against community found in the male culture of Clairton's bars and hunts' (425, emphasis added). In the most obvious inversion, the 'one shot' of Michael's hunting code becomes the one shot in Russian roulette, where dreams of power turn into a nightmare for Michael and his friends (Callenbach 1979: 21). Hellmann argues that 'there are deep ambiguities within this apparent confrontation between innocent whites and dark savages' (1982: 425). The NVA/NLF 'display the same impulse and even the same iconography as did Michael and his friends in the bar in Clairton when they drank and bet on televised football' (426). The NVA/NLF leader is an inversion of Michael's character: 'tense, suspicious, almost hysterical, terrified – everything that Mike (apparently) isn't' (Wood 2003: 255).

For Hellmann, 'the Viet Cong function as demonic images of *the latent impulses of the American culture*, particularly as embodied in the western hero, Michael' (1982: 426, emphasis added). Leslie Fiedler echoes this analysis, arguing that 'we ourselves [the US people] have been from the very start the Beast in View' (1990: 395). Thus, *The Deer Hunter* is understood as (re-)presenting 'Vietnam as a frontier landscape so hostile that America, having come as the hunter with dreams of omnipotence, is held

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[20] Hellmann also notes that Michael's use of a flamethrower to kill the Vietnamese soldier 'visually asserts ambiguity of the scene' because it calls attention to the fact that the scene opens with the village being blown apart by (US-manufactured) napalm (1982: 424-5).

captive in it and forced to confront the full implications of its own impulses' (Hellmann 1982: 426). The film is thus 'centrally concerned with the way in which the invasion of Vietnam (a country) by America is answered by the invasion of America by Vietnam ([as] an experience, a symbol, a state of mind)' (Wood 2003: 247, parentheses in original, text in brackets added).

The final inversion is the substitution of the traditional happy and successful ending for one in which the protagonist's best friends have been killed and maimed for no obvious purpose or positive outcome. Michael's failure to rescue Nick is 'nevertheless a crucial journey *The Deer Hunter* suggests America must make, a return to its Vietnam experience to face the fact of its destroyed innocence' (Hellmann 1982: 428). The notion of Michael embarking on a quest to avenge Nick is irrelevant, since the point of the film 'is to determine how a culture proceeds once it has experienced the inversion of its central assumptions about itself' (426). The revenge quest is pointless because the US is fundamentally altered by the experience, which cannot be undone. Wood articulates this final 'disintegration' of the US's mythical foundations, and the 'lost viability' of the tradition of constructing images of an 'ideal America', quite negatively, as something (masculinity?) lost (Wood 2003: 252, 248, 258).

In contrast, Hellmann reads *The Deer Hunter* as having transformed Vietnam into 'a regenerative myth that makes the traumatic experience a conceivably fortunate fall for the American Adam' (1986: 202), allowing the US to 'awaken from its dream of innocence into a mature consciousness' (1982: 429). Eben Muse concurs, seeing the characters as celebrating 'a community that has altered since the film's beginning, that has faced some truth about its creation, and which continues' (Muse 1994: 309). For Hellmann, the film's final scene, in which the remaining characters spontaneously sing 'God Bless America' at Nick's wake in the bar, is therefore 'neither jingoistic absolution for America's Vietnam involvement nor an iconic commentary' (Hellmann 1982: 429) but, rather, a poignant portrayal of the Western hero '[a]ccepting loss and trauma... [and] tak[ing] a place in the community' (429). The group's singing represents the attempt to come to terms with the inversion of the myth.

Hellmann's reading is significant in that it attributes substantial critical weight to *The Deer Hunter* as effecting a deconstruction of the Western genre's (and the US's) founding national myth. However, he does not explore any other possible readings of this narrative inversion. His interpretation focuses on the folly of attempting to establish control over the savage wilderness and on the inherent connection between 'civilisation' (bombing those it is ostensibly trying to save)[21] and 'savages', with whom they share cultural characteristics and behaviours. However, I remain unpersuaded by Fiedler's argument that the US becomes the 'Beast *in View*', or that the 'full implications' one is forced to confront are as Hellmann perceives them.

Furthermore, in providing a monolithic reading of *The Deer Hunter* which argues for an interpretation of the film as an overarching critique of civilisation's delusions of domination over nature, Hellmann neglects to analyse the essential contributing characteristics of the Western genre (e.g., the Vietnamese as savages, the marginalisation of women) which are left unproblematised as a result. In the next section, I discuss alternative ways of interpreting these representations, and the narrative structure of *The Deer Hunter*, with a particular focus on the gendered dynamics of the film. A somewhat different picture emerges if we place gender at the centre of the inquiry. Specifically, I argue, while the ending of the film offers a symbolic penetration of a previously masculine space by the feminine, this can be read as women being invited, and even required, to assist in a project of US remasculinisation.

Gendering the Western Myth: The Feminine/Domestic Sphere

Michael's quiet yet forceful masculinity is in striking contrast to the other male characters, especially the ostentatious, loud and emotional machismo of Stash: Michael's steely insistence on the one-shot code is 'the supreme proof of a man's virility' (Russell 2002: 41). Not wanting to 'waste himself on sluts, he has saved his one shot for a natural doe-eyed beauty' (Kinder 1979: 16). Steven and Nick fall short of Michael's strict moral code. Although the bad luck is attributed to Angela at the

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[21] Cf. Frances Fitzgerald's (2002:393) reference to a US officer telling an AP reporter, during the 1968 Tet Offensive, that 'We had to destroy it [the village of Ben Tre] in order to save it'.

wedding, it is in fact Steven who spills the wine by drinking too fast and tipping the vessel. This scene reveals Steven's 'consistently signified near-hysteria, which has its source in his split allegiance to the world of domesticity (Angela, marriage) and to the world of male camaraderie' (Wood 2003: 252). Nick is feminised by his love of the mountains (peace) rather than hunting (conflict). In particular, the ending of the film seems to associate Nick's weakness with the US evacuation of Saigon, which was (seen as) a defeat. This association is achieved through the manner of Michael's return to Vietnam at the end of April 1975, when he lands on the roof of a US embassy in a helicopter while others are waiting to leave, as was made famous by the media footage of the evacuation plan, Operation Frequent Wind.

The three main protagonists can be ranked by their relation to the masculine 'one shot' code, finding 'a clear hierarchy of behaviour in terms of the code, a hierarchy that finally dictates how and if one survives Vietnam' (Jeffords 1989: 95). Michael exemplifies the code, espousing it and embodying it, whereas

> Stevie is Michael's opposite, not even attempting the code. He does not go on the hunt and cannot take the shot in prison, panicking at the last second and firing over his head. He has the most complete association with women, succumbing to love and a woman's will by taking on the consequences of someone else's actions and marrying Angela. (Jeffords 1989: 95)

Steven comes back only half a man (as a paraplegic), although alive. The third man, Nick, 'violates the code by trying to have it both ways: he accepts his affiliation with Michael and the code... but violates the "one shot" agreement' (Jeffords 1989: 95), such that he dies in Vietnam, 'lost in a land where codes seem to have come permanently undone' (95). The moral: '[o]ne must either live all of the points of the code (Michael) [masculine] or not attempt it at all (Stevie) [feminine] but not attempt and fail [Nick, androgyny]' (95; parentheses in original, text in brackets added).[22]

Arguably, *The Deer Hunter*

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[22] Cimino echoes this analysis in the DVD commentary, in which he states that there are only three options in the film: you come back from Vietnam alive, dead, or crippled.

> must be among the most difficult of all films for women to relate to. It is not that the film is openly or obviously misogynistic (Linda, especially, is presented as a thoroughly sympathetic character[)] ... rather, it is that women are marginalized without the film expressing any awareness that they are harmed by that. (Wood 2003: 257)

Women are not a 'significant force' (Callenbach 1979: 21) and this absence and marginalisation of women persists throughout. The film presents a 'patriarchal... regressive portrayal' of women, who are 'present to be fought over, as bossy mothers, and in the role of not altogether faithful, weak, yet at the right moment supportive partners' (Ryan and Kellner 2002: 281, 288). Steven's mother, Angela and her bridesmaids have one or two lines but the audience is aware of very few females at all, except for some South Vietnamese women and children who are depicted at a distance as victims and refugees, brief shots of some nurses in the US Army hospital in Saigon where Nick is treated, and the prostitute Nick almost sleeps with in Saigon.

On the DVD commentary, Linda is referred to as "the archetypal woman of the West", and she is the most central female character, but even her presence is peripheral. Linda 'embodies the feminine values of love and compassion' (Hellmann 1982: 428), appearing first serving her father and later as Nick's girlfriend. She works in the local supermarket and her life appears 'small and petty' (Muse 1994: 308). Ultimately, however, Linda is placed in an ambiguous position, seducing Michael upon his return to the US, despite being engaged to Nick, and 'it is strongly implied that Nick's inability to confront Clairton after the loss of innocence represented by Vietnam is centred on an inability to confront Linda, who thereby becomes in a sense the cause of his defection' (Wood 2003: 248).[23] Angela is also portrayed as treacherous, through her illegitimate pregnancy by another man, and because the depressive state in which Michael finds her upon his return to Clairton has resulted in the abandonment of Steven in the VA hospital, who is unable to cope with the trauma of his amputations.

Gender can also be read in and through *The Deer Hunter* beyond simply the representation of women's (or men's) bodies. The film's structure divides into complementary alternating discrete (and diminishing) segments (see Figure 4.1). The

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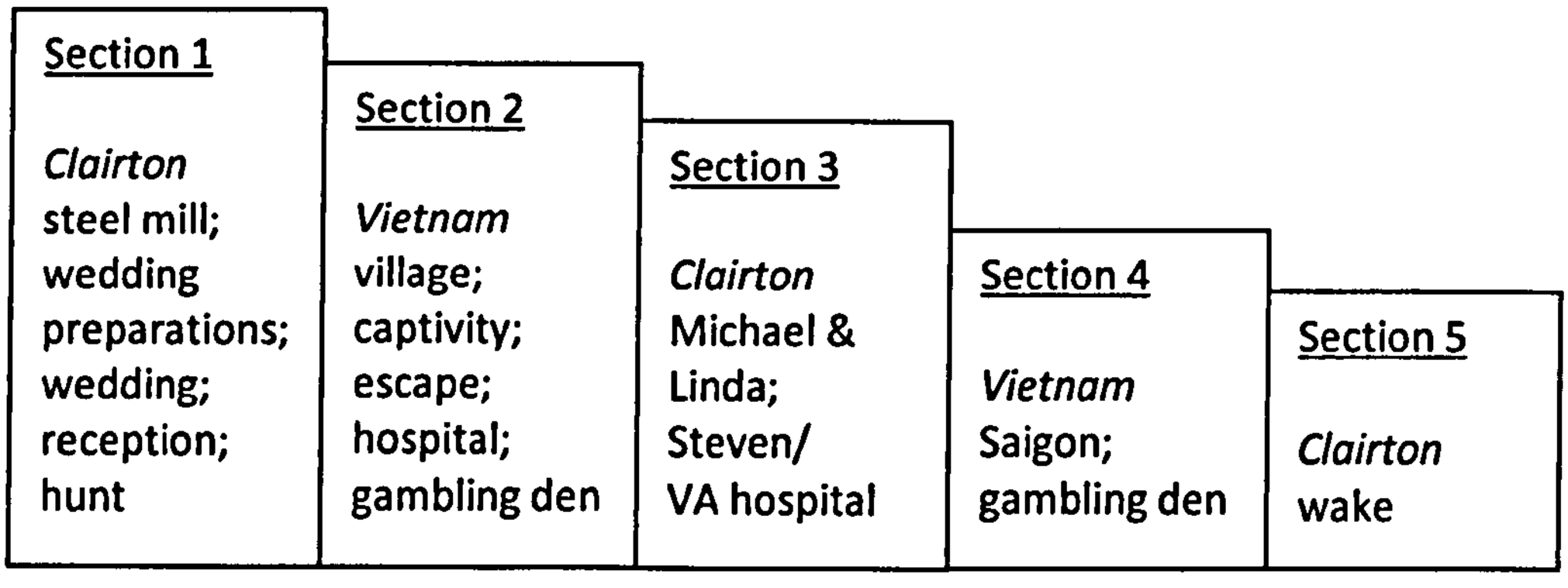
[23] When Nick calls Linda from Vietnam, he hangs up rather than talk to her.

odd-numbered sections, set in Clairton, represent the feminised domestic sphere (in IR terms), fluid and ponderous, almost entirely devoted to spectacle. They provide a lot of space for the richness of the characters to be collectively developed, but very little action and progression of the narrative occurs in these sections.

Furthermore, although the first half of the film focuses on the domestic scenes of the wedding and the reception, it is itself 'framed by the masculine moments of the steel mill and the hunting expedition' (Jeffords 1989: 97), both spaces from which women are empirically and symbolically excluded (Ryan and Kellner 2002: 282). Michael's unexplained flight from the wedding (after Stash reveals that Angela is carrying somebody else's baby) is accounted for by his wanting to strip himself of the vestments that 'mark his participation in the scheme of women' (Jeffords 1989: 96) and, in contrast to the relative disengagement he seems to display during the wedding, he displays an intense reverence for the rituals and activities associated with the hunt (Hellmann 1982: 422).

Figure 4.1: Narrative Sections of *The Deer Hunter*



Source: adapted from Wood (2003: 247).

Sections 2 and 4 are set in Vietnam, the masculinised international sphere. Here, in contrast, the film's focus on the (male) characters is individualised, with rapid action and narrative progression. Specifically,

> the gun is a phallic symbol, a particularly male instrument of power and threat and domination. All the critical dramatic scenes in *Deer Hunter* (including the flame-thrower scene) turn on the employment of a gun. ... Events of other kinds – the wedding, the party ... by contrast have a sort of second-class status in the film... they tend to be inert dramatically. (Callenbach 1979: 20)

The scenes in Vietnam reject, in structural terms, the wedding and the feminine, in favour of the masculine (Jeffords 1989: 98). Even the scene with the Green Beret during the wedding reception plays its part in this process, since the momentary rupture/rejection of the masculine bond associated with military service occurs within the (domestic) feminised space, scene and section (99).

Vietnam as a country and as terrain, along with its inhabitants, is 'othered' within the film. The filth of the village scene, of the POW camp and of Saigon, contrasts starkly with the 'tired, humane streets' of Clairton (Auster and Quart 1988: 64). The Vietnamese are the most impenetrable characters within the entire narrative – represented as abstract, as inscrutable Orientals – be they 'Treacherous Foe' or 'Oppressed Mass' (Dempsey 1979: 12). Their dialogue during the Russian roulette scenes is never translated, because it is entirely unimportant to the narrative, and there are very few other scenes in which the Vietnamese speak at all. The Vietnamese are irrational, 'grinning and diabolic' (Auster and Quart 1988: 63), violent and simply 'mindlessly evil' (Dempsey 1979: 11).[24]

Whether as savages, victims, refugees or gamblers, the Vietnamese are literally part of the natural landscape, there to make the film look authentic, much like the molten steel of the opening sequence in the steel-mill. Cimino has included some 'sympathetic' shots in which 'refugees are seen streaming along the roads with their sparse possessions... But they are usually seen in a long shot, and in almost every instance that the camera gets sufficiently close to personalize, it sees evil and contemptibility' (Auster and Quart 1988: 64). The Vietnamese are not the victims in this account. In contrast, the three Americans' pain and trauma is depicted in 'highly detailed and specific' sequences (Dempsey 1979: 12).

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[24] Although the Vietnamese are not unambiguously feminised, they are decisively defeated by Michael when he chooses to make his escape, and at no stage are we shown any Vietnamese with martial skills.

Indeed, almost every event and detail in the film is overloaded with symbolic ritual *from a US perspective*, which is perhaps why Cimino is unable to create any empathy with the Vietnamese: 'the only ritual he gives *them* is Russian roulette' (Dempsey 1979: 12, original emphasis). The Vietnamese lack context, history, agency; they are merely foils against which the exploration of the American myth can take place. In this sense, they are presented as less than human (recall Hellmann's suggestion that the Vietnamese are the inversion of the 'beautiful deer'), while the narrative encourages uncritical identification with Michael and his friends, never stating or exploring why the trio enlisted, how or why the US is in Vietnam, or what the conflict is all about. For the myth to be fundamentally destabilised, I argue, the Vietnamese would have to have been portrayed as having *some* redeeming, human, qualities.

Two iconic events from the war are in particular reversed in the film's imagery: the Russian roulette scenes invoke the photograph taken of General Loan's summary execution of a NLF/VC suspect during the 1968 Tet Offensive (Chong 2005; Franklin 2000: 14-22). The second is the shot of Steven and Michael falling from the US helicopter, an image which (for those who are aware of US actions in Vietnam) recalls the alleged practice of NLF/VC prisoners being thrown out of helicopters and planes (Franklin 2000: 16). Cimino's method, essentially, is to 'take images of the war that had become deeply embedded in America's consciousness and change them into their opposites' (15). All in all, the film 'succeeded not only in reversing key images of the war but also in helping to canonize US prisoners of war' as the 'quintessential symbols of betrayed American manhood', a semiotic association which has lasted into the twenty-first century (15, 193). In the 'biggest role reversal of all, the Americans [in particular, US soldiers] are shown to be the true victims of the war in Viet Nam' (Kranz 1980), with the narrative carefully and sympathetically demonstrating that 'whatever happens, it's not their fault' (Kranz 1980).

This victimisation is a significant and potentially critical aspect of the film, offering an 'implicit critique of certain male myths' (Ryan and Kellner 2002: 288). Michael, who is able to dominate nature (the deer) with his violence in the mountains, is unable to dominate nature (the Vietnamese) in war. During the second hunt, he does not (or cannot) kill the deer, subsequently exploding with fury at Stash, whose antics he had

been able to withstand prior to the first hunt. Michael, 'the hero, who has always defined himself in terms of perfect (self-)control, abruptly loses it, succumbing to the chaos against which he has tried to stand' (Wood 2003: 256). Although Michael manages to escape the Vietnamese and to rescue Nick and Steven, ultimately, he cannot bring back Steven's legs, nor can he bring Nick back from Vietnam alive. The narrative even remains ambivalent about Michael's 'liberation' of Steven from the VA hospital, which is not portrayed as having any guarantee of a positive outcome for either Steven or Angela as individuals or in terms of their relationship, since the film refuses to imply that there is such a thing as a happy ending.

The destabilisation of some of the masculine norms and expectations of cinematic narrative is highlighted in the final scene, in which Angela and Linda gather, with the men, in the previously unambiguously all-male and very masculinised location of the bar, in order to hold Nick's wake. The 'acceptance of the women into the male space of the tavern' may be considered crucial 'in the context of the breakdown of male ritual and the failure of the hero' (Wood 2003: 257). In Hellmann's reading of the film, the western hero has accepted the loss and trauma, taking his place in the community (Hellmann 1982: 429), offering the opportunity to reunite, redeem and regenerate the community with the knowledge he now possesses. In this context, 'God Bless America' affirms a renewed belief in the future.

However, it is by no means clear that Michael's experience of this inversion, or his 'regeneration' as a result of the violence he was subjected to in Vietnam (as opposed to experiencing regeneration through violence of his own conduct), will lead to a *rejection* of the American myth. There is nothing in the narrative of *The Deer Hunter* that confirms that Michael's (re)actions are anything other than transitory. There is no evidence that Michael has become a pacifist, for example, that he has analysed the role of politics, culture and myth in his own assumptions about what it means to be a citizen, an American, a man, nor that he has come to any new conclusion about the way to live an honourable life. Given the resemblance of Michael's outburst to symptoms typically associated with the then newly 'invented' post-traumatic stress

disorder (PTSD),[25] his actions can plausibly be read as the actions of someone very much in the middle of turbulent processes of change (and who could, or should, 'get over it'), rather than as someone who has rationally determined a new course for himself. Thus, the final 'God Bless America' scene can be interpreted as the first act in the process of *forgetting* the inversion of the myth and returning (or attempting to return) to the status quo ante, through regaining the innocence that was lost with Vietnam.

Although it is an important move, in the context of the argument just made, the symbolic penetration of the bar's masculine space by Angela and Linda is simply too little, too late. The gendered dynamics of the film's narrative structure having functioned in such a way as to assert the dominance of the masculine at every stage, the final scene merely serves to *co-opt t*he women rather than to suggest fundamental changes to the gender order portrayed in the film. Linda and Angela have been permitted to play a part in recuperating and rehabilitating the American project but this is an invitation to participate more fully in supporting (re-invigorating) a nationalist, masculinist US identity. In a more general sense, then, while *The Deer Hunter* may portray the temporary inversion of the American myth (i.e., its fallibility), which is a significant move and which opens up critical space, the film in no way demonstrates that this inversion is to be a permanent transformation. Indeed, one might imagine (given the resonance and endurance of the American myth over the last two centuries) that the most likely response to such a defeat by overwhelming violence might be to resolve never to let such an event re-occur; to ensure, in other words, that one's own violence against others will, in the future, be *so* overwhelming as to preclude any possibility of being overwhelmed oneself.

In portraying violence as beyond control, and not exploring in more depth the precise ways in which the American myth is deployed in the conduct of US foreign policy in Vietnam, the effect of this move – to use the war and the location of Vietnam as an environmental backdrop rather than the central purpose of the film's exploration – is

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[25] See Summerfield (2001) for an overview of the invention of PTSD in the aftermath of the Vietnam War.

to render the conflict in Vietnam (and the Vietnamese) incomprehensible. In films such as *The Deer Hunter*, there is

> a mood of overwhelming nostalgia for an America that has been lost, for the American dream gone astray or betrayed. ... But in the very strength with which spectacle creates nostalgia there lies a certain danger. ... [T]he mood of these films gently persuades us that all idealism is empty, all action futile, history and historical awareness unimportant. (Greene 1984-5: 35-6)

In a similar point to that which Susan Jeffords makes with regard to Nick's attempt at living the code and failing (above), the 'reaffirmation of male military power in the character of Michael is predicated upon the purgation of weakness, vacillation, and the obsessively suicidal behaviour in which the country was engaged in Vietnam, all of which seem embodied in Nick' (Ryan and Kellner 2002: 288). Nick's suicide 'seems to be purging the American male of his self-destructiveness and doubts' (Kinder 1979: 16) – doubts that have arisen both internationally, with the US's failure in Vietnam, but also domestically, with the rise of the civil rights movement, Black Power, Women's Liberation and gay liberation movements. This resurgence of masculine power in the final scene 'reinforces a hope for an American Collectivity through promises kept by men to each other' (Jeffords 1989: 97). *The Deer Hunter* enacts the restoration of the moral community through patriarchal values and 'offers an allegorical solution to the problem Vietnam poses by symbolically purging the source of defeat and proposing a way to renewed national strength and patriotic cohesion' (Ryan and Kellner 2002: 288-9).

By the end, the film has come 'full circle on its masculine imagery' (Jeffords 1989: 96). Framed, as it is, by this imagery 'and structured by its bonds', Cimino's film 'tells the story, not of the war in Vietnam, but the war of gender' (98). *The Deer Hunter* provides an interpretation of the American myth in which the US is not an omnipotent force for civilisation and progress, but in order to do so, the narrative requires the complete marginalisation of female characters and a return to the sorts of gendered and ethnic stereotypes and representations in cultural texts from earlier eras that have already been much criticised.

Furthermore, unless one is acquainted with academic critiques of American ideology and mythology, it is not at all clear that John Hellmann's reading would be available to many film-goers. It is not enough for Cimino to claim that the film is not 'about' the Vietnam War, if it is used as the context for the diegesis. As a result, it is likely that the more commonplace approach to this film is to take it as, if not entirely historically accurate, then at the very least as attempting to say something about this *specific* conflict (as well as about war in general), rather than something relating to the American myth of regeneration through violence. Cimino's decision to contextualise the film through a 'real' war – and, particularly, his claim on the DVD commentary that Russian roulette is 'still' being played in Southeast Asia – functions to represent the Vietnamese 'enemy' as treacherous and barbaric, attributes which appear just as 'real'(i.e., based on historical fact) as the war itself. Finally, the basis for the regeneration of the collective national psyche, which is (allegorically) in the process of being redeemed and regenerated at the end of the film, is in no way formulated as a clear rejection of violence and domination; rather, the filmic narrative merely appears to suggest that the aim of forcing civilisation upon the unwilling savages was unsuccessful in this particular case but not necessarily fundamentally morally flawed. Read in this way, the American myth, along with all of its underlying (gendered) binaries, has been momentarily shaken, but not completely destroyed.

Conclusion

A reading of *The Deer Hunter* indicates the profound nature of the trauma that the Vietnam War caused in the US national psyche, resonating at the level of foundational masculine myths and traditions, which have been shaken by loss in Vietnam. I have outlined the ways in which the film eschews explicit political commentary on the Vietnam War in favour of a focus on male bonding, which can be queered in a homoerotic account which is nevertheless reactionary in its punishment of the androgynous figure of Nick. I have also shown how the film's reworking of the Western myth, which Hellmann reads as critical, relies on conventional accounts of gender and racialised difference, thus undermining its critical potential. In its portrayal of US soldiers as victims, of the Vietnamese as dehumanised, of the

feminine sphere as marginalised and of the co-opting of women as essential to the rebuilding of US masculinity, I have argued that the US myth is more resilient than Hellmann suggests. As I explore in the next chapter, *Rambo: First Blood, Part II* carries forward the legacy of the Western's generic traditions, reworking these in ways that are both strikingly different yet eerily reminiscent of *The Deer Hunter*, in order to effect a profound remasculinisation of US identity, the beginnings of which is only hinted at in *The Deer Hunter*.

Chapter 5: *Rambo: First Blood, Part II*

Introduction

After the success of the cinematic adaptation of *First Blood* (1982) – directed by Ted Kotcheff and co-written by Michael Kozoll, William Sackheim and Sylvester Stallone – author David Morrell revived the character of Rambo (who died in the original novel) for the sequel. The second book and film, both entitled *Rambo: First Blood, Part II* (hereafter *Rambo II*) were released in 1985.[1] Sylvester Stallone, the star of the films, and co-author of the *Rambo II* screenplay, had became a superstar overnight in the late 1970s, when the highly-profitable *Rocky* (1976), Stallone's script-writing debut, won three Academy Awards, including Best Picture. His portrayal of the eponymous boxer made him a working class hero and household name, famous for the embodiment of brute strength in his muscular torso, representations which are reprised (albeit with different political inflections) in the *Rambo* films.

Examining the continuities and the transformations between the original book and the first film permits the themes of *Rambo II* to be read more clearly. The shifts in representation from the 1972 novel to the 1982 film of *First Blood* establish a framework within which the Vietnam veteran is rehabilitated as an honourable, capable and virtuous warrior, who is unappreciated and victimised by the society to which he returns. These representations are even more starkly articulated (and gendered) in *Rambo II*. In the sections following the discussion of the film's prequels, I argue that the film's narrative is structured, as *The Deer Hunter* before it, through the generic conventions and binary categories of the Western, reworking these to rearticulate both the image of the veteran and US involvement in Vietnam. Beyond this, the film also invokes sado-masochistic representations of the hypermasculine male body as spectacle, which attempts but ultimately undermines a project of remasculinisation. In the final section of the chapter, I outline how, more graphically than in *The Deer Hunter*, the 'enemies' Rambo opposes and ultimately defeats in the film are feminised.

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[1] *Rambo III*, the third film, was released in 1988. The trilogy expanded in 2008 to incorporate the fourth instalment, *Rambo*.

Relevant Context: From *First Blood* to *Rambo II*

First Blood (Morrell 1973) is the story of John Rambo, a Special Forces (Green Beret) veteran, and his run-in with local law enforcement – specifically with the Chief of Police, Wilfred Teasle – in the small (fictional) Kentucky town of Madison and its rural hinterland in Basalt County. The last years of American involvement in the Vietnam War provide the general context to the action, although the story contains very few overt references to the war, and none at all to US success or failure in that theatre of conflict. Although the book and the subsequent film adaptation share many common plot developments, the divergences between them are found in both the general textual elements – narrative function, structure and resolution – and in those apparently innocuous and subtle details that do so much to code particular scenes, characters, and events without the viewer necessarily consciously being invited to reflect upon these.

In Morrell's novel, there are two parallel protagonists, Teasle and Rambo, with the narrative oscillating between these two characters' points of view. Of Teasle, we learn that his mother died when he was very young, and that his father died soon after, when he was just ten. Brought up by his father's best friend, Orval, Teasle seems to have struggled with this *ersatz*-paternal relationship for most of his life, and his marriage is about to end in divorce (his wife has left him and moved to California) – thus, he is clearly a flawed human being, rather than a 'perfect hero'. The sheriff is portrayed as respectable, honest and well-meaning, if culturally conservative, a Korean War hero who was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions during the Battle of Chosin Reservoir in December of 1950.

Rambo is also a war hero, a recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor, although he looks like (is?) a vagrant, with shoulder-length hair, a long beard, filthy clothes and muddy boots. The omniscient third-person narration informs us that Rambo's mother died of cancer when he was young and that he grew up with an abusive and alcoholic father who tried to kill him. Rambo has been moved on from fifteen other towns previous to this encounter in Madison, and he doesn't appear to have a home or any explicit purpose for being in Kentucky. He has suffered a nervous breakdown

in the past (Morrell 1973: 164) and he appears to be suffering from classic symptoms of PTSD as a result of his capture, captivity and escape from a North Vietnamese prison camp, some of which is described in the book (pp.39-44) and which in large part functions to explain and mitigate, if not excuse, his motives, actions and reactions.

As sheriff, Teasle represents the town, civilisation, the domestic sphere, and his power and authority derive from social structures, from the law. He is the embodiment of the state's monopoly over the legitimate use of violence and his motivation is the (re)establishment of order. His is a classic bourgeois model of masculinity (see Hooper 2001: 95-103). In direct contrast, Rambo represents the frontier, wilderness, the international sphere, and his power and authority derive from his individual physical strength and abilities, and his knowledge of nature and the landscape. Rambo is motivated by military definitions of victory. His is a warrior model of masculinity. The central dynamic of the book is the conflict between these two figures and their respective normative codes. Despite these differences, however, there are clear parallels and similarities between the two protagonists. Rambo and Teasle are both flawed heroes (anti-heroes), traumatised by their past. They are both decorated combat veterans. They both simultaneously inhabit the position of hunter and hunted within the narrative, and they both act according to the models of behaviour into which they have been trained, which, for them, are rational decision-making logics; and neither is prepared to admit defeat. *Both* models of masculinity are portrayed as honourable and yet also as irrational, as normatively problematic and, ultimately, as deeply destructive.

The theme of the novel centres on the problematic of the returning veteran. Morrell raises a number of important issues surrounding the possibility of 'rehabilitating' and reintegrating into society those who have witnessed the trauma of war, and of society's failure to deal adequately with these concerns. The book is an indictment of bourgeois society (while, at the same time, not valorising Rambo's actions), for its lack of recognition of the impossibility of such a rigid separation of the domestic ('peaceful', ordered) and international ('violent', anarchic) spheres. While it can be read as a story about US society's neglect of the Vietnam veteran (specifically), it is

the traumas that Rambo has suffered in war and the broader implications of being trained as a killer who lives outside of society, rather than his treatment back in the US, that have unhinged him to the extent that he has become a mass murderer.

In the filmic version, however, many of the basic facts of the story are altered, and almost all of the events of the film are shown from Rambo's perspective. The opening scene of the film inserts action and events that precede the first chapter of the book (in which we were introduced to Rambo and Teasle almost simultaneously, as they encountered each other for the first time). In the film, we first see Rambo alone, as he trudges down a mountain road, looking more presentable than the description of his literary counterpart suggested; in particular, lacking the 'long heavy beard' (Morrell 1973: 9). Stallone, with perhaps a day's growth of stubble and hair that appears more blow-dried than unkempt, is wearing nondescript (but not ripped) blue jeans, a slightly grubby (but certainly not blood-stained) military coat, with a US flag patch on the right breast, a red sweatshirt and hiking boots, and is carrying a sleeping bag tied with string. He appears more traveller than vagrant, and, as he pauses on the road overlooking a lake, where children are playing in the sun, he smiles in a very unthreatening way, a far cry from the mutual mistrust of the opening passages of Morrell's novel.

Rambo goes from having no particular purpose in town (in the book) to looking for a comrade from the war, Delmar Berry (in the film), apparently the only other surviving member of the team that served together in Vietnam. Rambo is articulate, friendly, respectful and polite, certainly well able to interact normally with others. He learns from a black woman (presumably Berry's wife or mother) that Berry has died of cancer: 'brought it back from 'Nam; all that Orange stuff they spreaded around... cut him down to nothing'.[2] From within the film's framing of the story, then, we are almost immediately inclined to align with Rambo, in particular, and with veterans, more generally, and to see them as victims of the war, of US tactics and of a government that used chemical warfare so liberally. (In the book, Rambo is portrayed only as a victim of the North Vietnamese.)

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[2] Rambo later tells Trautman that Berry 'got himself killed in 'Nam, didn't even know it. Cancer ate him down to the bone'.

Most significantly, in the book, it is Rambo who draws first blood: the encounter between Rambo and the police turns fatal when Teasle and two deputies attempt to cut Rambo's hair and shave his beard. Their actions trigger Rambo's traumatic memories of the war, and he instinctively lashes out, grabbing the cut-throat razor and, when an inexperienced deputy (named Galt in the book) goes to shoot him, he kills him by slashing his abdomen with the razor before escaping (naked) from the police station (wounding and possibly blinding one other officer along the way) and making for the mountains. When Rambo lashes out, Teasle shouts to his deputy not to use his gun in the cell, also discouraging him from using his gun on the street, and making sure that, when they hunt Rambo in the hills, he is given the opportunity to give himself up. Teasle abides strictly by the bourgeois code he represents.

In the screenplay, the 'first blood' scenario unfolds very differently: in the holding cell, one of the officers, Galt (in this version, an experienced and cruel officer), physically assaults Rambo without provocation, kicking him, beating him with his night-stick and choking him with it, in a manner reminiscent of the torture Rambo underwent during captivity (shown through flashback), and the cut-throat razor is now tied (again, through flashback) to a specific incident in Vietnam, rather than the much more general connections between Vietnam and this experience that Morrell had constructed. In general, Teasle and his deputies are represented in the film as arrogant, corrupt, disparaging and dismissive of Rambo's military service and as inept in the use of physical force.[3]

In stark contrast to the book, Rambo does not deliberately set out to kill anybody in the film (other than the four Dobermans being used to hunt him) – in fact, the only human death in the entire film is accidental: when Rambo is hanging exposed from a ledge on the cliff, it is Galt who shoots at him from a helicopter, falling out in the process. When Rambo has finally incapacitated all of Teasle's deputies, and used them to lure Teasle into a trap, Rambo holds Teasle at knife-point, saying 'I could have killed them all. I could have killed you. In town, you're the law; out here, it's me.

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[3] Rambo is signified in opposition to government in a scene in which the deputies forcibly clean him with water from a fire-hose: 'Rambo twisting and turning in the powerful spray recalls scenes of civil demonstrations from Selma, Alabama, to Washington, DC, from the civil rights to the anti-war movements' (Rowe 1989: 204).

Don't push it. Don't push it, I'll give you a war you won't believe. Let it go. Let it go.' He then lets Teasle go. Teasle slumps to the ground and begins to cry. Teasle is completely defeated and emasculated in this scene (whereas, in the book, Teasle finally manages to kill Rambo, after Rambo has burnt significant portions of the town to the ground). Rather than portraying Teasle and Rambo as equal(ly flawed), the film clearly enacts a hierarchy, in which Rambo is superior to Teasle in every way.[4]

Many of the narrative elements of the film can be read as emblematic of specific critiques that emerged during, and in the aftermath of, the Vietnam War. The portrayal of the media as presenting erroneous information about the conflict between Rambo and the police – which does not occur in the novel – echoes the claim that the media was responsible for losing the Vietnam War through misrepresentation(s) of the 1968 Tet Offensive as a victory for the Viet Cong, commonly seen as the turning point in the Vietnam War (which, it is argued, led to the decline in public support for the war; see Braestrup 1983).[5] In *First Blood*, the methods of warfare are inverted, with the Sheriff's Department and the National Guard signifying the US military and traditional warfare, while Rambo takes on the position of the VC, with his use of guerrilla tactics.[6] The shots of the Washington National Guard wearing ponchos and helmets in the rain – just like soldiers in Vietnam – and using smoke flares to signal the helicopter to the landing zone, is familiar imagery from other Vietnam films. The National Guard are here feminised as 'weekend warriors', and as incompetent soldiers who fail to follow orders, who attempt to defeat Rambo with technology rather than military skill, and who treat the situation as a joke. The guardsman with the rocket launcher is skinny, wears glasses and has a neatly-trimmed moustache – the antithesis of Rambo's appearance. When Teasle and Colonel Trautman (Rambo's former commanding officer) arrive on

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[4] I have not found any accounts of author David Morrell's reaction to, or opinion about, the alterations made to his original story for the film.

[5] For counter-arguments to Braestrup's thesis, see, *inter alia*, Chomsky (1978) and Hallin (1989).

[6] Sweeney argues that this 'ironic reversal would suggest that any American involvement in the war was wrong. The deputies, representing America, are the enemy who is unjustifiably pursuing a "war" against Rambo, who represents the Viet Cong' (1999: 64). However, I argue that it is equally possible to read this as a clear statement that US soldiers were physically and tactically capable of winning in Vietnam, but that they were prevented from doing so by civilian micro-management of military strategy.

the scene, the Guardsmen are trying to recreate the famous Iwo Jima photograph with a fallen tree-trunk, posing for the camera, and discussing how they can send it in to the popular paramilitary magazine, *Soldier of Fortune*.

Towards the end of the film, when Trautman tells Rambo that 'this mission is over', Rambo yells at him,

> *Nothing is over*! *Nothing*! You just don't turn it off! It wasn't my war! You asked me, I didn't ask you! And I did what I had to do to win but somebody wouldn't let us win! And I come back to the World[7] and I see all those maggots at the airport, protesting me, spitting, calling me 'baby-killer' and all kindsa vile crap! Who are they to protest me, huh?! Who are they, unless they *been* me and *been* there, and know what the hell they're yelling about?!

When Trautman tries to tell him that these events are in the past, Rambo responds,

> For you! For me, civilian life is nothing. In the field we had a code of honour: you watch my back, I'll watch yours. Back here, there's nothing. ... Back there I could fly a gunship. I could drive a tank. I was in charge of million-dollar equipment. Back here I can't even hold a job *parking cars*! ... I had all these guys, man. Back there. I had all these fighting guys who were my friends. 'Cause back here, there's nothing.

He then tells the story of a friend who was blown up by a Viet Cong bomb (set by a shoeshine boy), before bursting into tears and crying on Trautman's shoulder while Trautman silently comforts him. Rambo is also traumatised and partially emasculated in this ending but he has not failed physically or militarily and his trauma and victimisation come at the hands of US domestic society as well as – if not more so than – the torture he suffered as a POW. Trautman's relationship with Rambo is another key difference between the book and the film. In the book, Trautman is distanced from Rambo: although Trautman was the commanding officer at the camp where Rambo was trained, he is merely a disembodied voice that Rambo recognises. In the film, this is a much more personal relationship – one which Susan Jeffords identifies as a father-son model (Jeffords 1994: 78-9). Rather than presenting Rambo and Teasle as two equal protagonists, and Trautman as assisting Teasle in defeating

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[7] 'The World' potentially refers to everything outside of the theatre of conflict in Vietnam, but is most commonly taken to mean the United States (Santoli 1982: 231; Terry 1985: 301).

Rambo, the film sets up a dynamic in which Teasle is the bad father, Trautman the good father, and Rambo a dutiful son of the military.[8]

In the text authored by Morrell, then, both Rambo and Teasle are sympathetic characters who have some justification for the way they act and the decisions they make, while Rambo's motivation, in particular, is blamed upon his training, the arduous conditions in combat, and US society's inability to deal with the implications of training soldiers to kill. The book offers a thought-provoking narrative that reflects explicitly on some of the consequences of the model of the liberal-democratic citizen-warrior. Trautman tells Teasle 'You tolerate a system that lets others do it [killing for a living] for you. And when they come back from the war, you can't stand the smell of death on them' (Morrell 1973: 164). Trautman also admits to not liking the army very much ('Who in his right mind would?' [164]). This argument is premised on a critique of war and of the military in principle, and remains valid whether the US were to win or lose in Vietnam (which, when Morrell was likely writing, in 1971-1972, was still not entirely clear).

The film, meanwhile, offers a much more sympathetic and one-sided portrayal of Rambo and the conflict than does the original novel, in which the 'problem' is not military men returning to civilian life *per se* but, rather, soldiers who have been badly treated by both the US government (by not being allowed to win the war) and by US society after the war has ended (for having been involved in a conflict that society has initially asked them to fight but has subsequently decided was morally wrong). The novel is an account of Rambo's struggle and ultimate failure to adapt to civilian life; the film is an account of how Rambo is *prevented* from leading an ordinary civilian life. This moves the object of critique away from war and from the relationship between militarism, the state and society, in general terms, towards a specific critique of US social and governmental institutions' mistakes in the context of Vietnam (the object of which critique perhaps includes the upper echelons of the military, but certainly not the ordinary soldier/veteran). In the film,

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[8] Trautman is a German name, whose linguistic components – '[ge]traut' + 'man' – can be interpreted as meaning 'trusted man'.

> Rambo is now differently textured, a more sympathetic hero of the new mood. His filmic representation allows the audience to identify with a persecuted veteran who has merely done his duty. Rambo, no longer inherently violent, is now a broken hero whose final weeping symbolises the United States' unconscious guilt at neglecting its veterans (Walsh 1988: 59).

Furthermore, '[m]ost crucially, Rambo is arrested rather than being killed, leaving open the possibility of his redemption' in later films (Westwell 2006: 71).

Timed to open just two weeks after the peak of media interest in the tenth anniversary of the fall/liberation of Saigon (Wimmer 1989: 185), *Rambo II* was a huge popular success, opening in a 'record-breaking' 2074 cinemas, with the third largest opening (gross) in US movie history (Kellner 1995: 69). The box office 'runaway' hit of the summer (Jeffords 1986: 188), *Rambo II* made US$3.25 million in the first six days of release (Doyle 1992: 18 n.23), $52.7 million in the first two weeks – at the time, the highest-ever two-week taking for an R-rated film (Jeffords 1986: 188) – and $100 million in its first ten weeks (Wimmer 1989: 184). By the end of the summer, the film had grossed more than $150 million (Kellner 1995: 70). It became 'the most lucrative movie in the history of the cinema' and Stallone was, for a period, the highest-paid actor in Hollywood (Wimmer 1989: 184). When it was released on video, *Rambo II* sold 420,000 units in its first day (PR Newswire in Kellner 1995: 72). The film was also lucrative in terms of the merchandising it spawned. In addition to action dolls, watches, walkie-talkies, water guns, bubble gum, pinball machines, sportswear, a series of more than fifty cartoon episodes, comics, video games, badges, t-shirts and 'Rambogram' strippers (Franklin 2000: 195; Kellner 1995: 70; Wimmer 1989: 185), it was also possible to buy life-sized (usable) replicas of the knives designed for and used by Stallone in *First Blood* and *Rambo II*.[9]

In contrast, critics' responses to the film were mostly negative, with reviews ranging from 'ironic scepticism to downright hostility' (Wimmer 1989: 184) and 'unmitigated scorn' (Fiedler 1990: 397).[10] As *People* magazine noted at the time, '"Ten years ago,

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[9] Official limited editions of these still sell for between £40 and £80 on the internet today, in addition to numerous cheaper copies.

[10] The distinguished US literary and cultural critic, Leslie Fiedler, would later describe the *Rambo* trilogy as 'incredibly ill constructed and poorly acted, as well as melodramatic, sentimental, gratuitous... [and] politically reactionary' (1990: 397).

after the collapse of Saigon and the anguish of the Watergate scandal, Rambo would have been laughed out of the movie theatres. The mood then was virulently antiwar, but today that's all changed"' (*People* quoted in Kellner 1995: 71). Some Vietnam veterans protested against the film, picketing cinemas in Boston, while teenagers queuing up to see the film screamed at the veterans to go home, shouting that Sylvester Stallone was a '"real veteran"' (Bowen 1990: 229). Women seemed to enjoy the film as much as men, with Ryan and Kellner noting that women 'are complicit in the socialization process of men for war. This was made particularly clear to us at a viewing of *Rambo*. Women in the theatre were especially loud in their demands for blood and vengeance' (2002: 301). Audiences particularly appeared to relish the climax of the film, cheering 'USA! USA!' in theatres (*Reuters* quoted in Kellner 1995: 91 n.16) and the US Army even took to hanging posters of Rambo outside military recruiting offices (*Time* in Kellner 1995: 70).

In the following analytical sections, I discuss: the representation of the character of Rambo and the film's narrative as part of the Western genre; the sado-masochistic spectacle of masculinity; and the feminisation of three different sets of enemies in *Rambo II*.

Vietnam as Western (Reprised)

Rambo's diverse ethnic background – part Native American, part German – provides Rambo with the symbolic resonances both of the 'noble savage' and of the fascist superhero, the Aryan *Übermensch*. Rambo's German-ness is his 'martial effectiveness and discipline' (Westwell 2006: 73). H. Bruce Franklin compares Stallone's physical appearance with Nazi propaganda posters (2000: 193). He is a super-soldier, invincible and indestructible, showing no weakness. In keeping with the conventions of the superhero, Rambo has prior military experience, is devoted to his mission, and has such a mastery over his own body that he is in complete control of his desires, and remains celibate throughout the film (excepting the rather chaste, 1950s-style kiss with Co, his female Vietnamese contact, who is killed immediately afterwards) (Sutton and Winn 2001: 28). As a Green Beret, Rambo is a pure fighting machine, war itself (Kellner 1995: 66; Gibson 1989: 24).). For Carl Boggs and Tom Pollard, 'the

Rambo character still represents virtually every historic American right-wing fantasy: superhuman male heroics, ultrapatriotism, weapons fetishism, a return to simple frontier ethics, reversal of defeat, conquest of evil others' (2007: 107).

As the 'incarnation of one of America's most cherished and enduring dreams' (Schechter and Semeiks 1991: 25), Rambo demonstrates the enduring popularity of the American frontier myth (Schechter and Semeiks 1991: 24), becoming 'the mythic figure of the white man gone native, like Natty Bumppo and Tarzan; thus enabling Stallone to imagine a version of the War in Vietnam in which the grunts rather than the gooks play the role of the Noble Savage' (Fiedler 1990: 398; Wimmer 1989: 188, 190), even more overtly than in the film of *First Blood*. Rambo is also associated with the man who had come to embody the frontier hero on screen for a whole generation of cinema-goers: of Rambo, Carl Boggs and Tom Pollard argue that 'it would be hard to find a warrior hero better exemplifying the virtues of American military action, superseding even the legendary John Wayne' (2008: 568; see also Taylor 2003: 144). Rambo is apart from society, able to find an outlet for his violent impulses only in support of a threatened community (Hellmann 1991). *Rambo II* opens with a call to adventure in the wilderness ('hell', a place that Rambo calls 'home'[11]), and a return to the primitive (symbolised both by the jungle landscape and the loss of equipment when Rambo jumps from the plane).

Rambo's physical strength and bodily power (Gibson 1989: 24), his individualism and his familiarity with and ease in the wilderness are key signifiers that mark him as a Western hero. In a symbolic rebirth, in which Rambo 'cuts his own [umbilical] cord', jumping free of the decadence of technology and of the 'maternal' bureaucracy 'that threatens to strangle its fetus', the 'self-sufficiency of the masculine subject' is graphically depicted (Jeffords 1994: 200 n.2). An excellent shot, even at a distance, Rambo is as at home with a knife, or bow and arrows as he is with guns. These weapons function as extensions of his body, making the technology itself appear like a force of nature (Kellner 1995: 66). Rambo deploys all the elements – fire, earth, water, air – burning reeds to effect a booby-trap in the village, appearing seemingly

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[11] In the film, Trautman tells Murdock that 'what you call hell, he [Rambo] calls home'.

out of nowhere from the mud, jumping into the helicopter from the river, and finally in his use of the helicopter to rescue the POWs.

Much like *The Deer Hunter*, *Rambo II* deploys the POW/MIA figure through the lens of the white captivity narrative (discussed in the previous chapter; see also Studlar and Desser 1988: 14; Fiedler 1990: 399; Williams 1991: 33; Schechter and Semeiks 1992: 24; Sutton and Wynn 2001: 29). Because the force of POW/MIA films 'flows from some of the deepest elements of American culture, they [the film-makers] were able to transform the POW/MIA *issue* intro a true *myth*' (Franklin 2000: 193, original emphasis). Rambo thus 'played an important rhetorical function – he restored the Vietnam War veteran to the status of American mythological frontier hero' (Sutton and Winn 2001: 29) that had been called into question in the films of the 1970s. Indeed, despite the ostensible focus on Vietnam, '*Rambo* ow[es] more to the legacy of John Ford than to the legacy of Ho Chi Minh' (Bowen 1990: 231), in the sense that the three different narrative sections of *Rambo II* are all variants of those which appear in adventures such as Westerns: the quest, the escape and revenge (Waller 1990: 115), while bearing no resemblance to historical events during or after the Vietnam War. However, the 'primary difference between *Rambo* and a classic captivity film like John Ford's *The Searchers* is that the former dispenses with all those extraneous elements – thematic complexity, psychological depth, artful cinematography, characterization – that don't directly contribute to the action' (Schechter and Semeiks 1991: 24).

A number of tropes are recuperated and inverted in *Rambo II*. Rambo's positioning – despite his distinguished military career – as outside the mainstream and as part of the counter-culture is signified by his long hair held back by a sweatband, by his bare chest, by the oriental charm he takes and wears after Co's death, and in his attitude towards authority figures. He is '"the heir to the iconography of the hippies, the counter-culture turned into a contra"' (Berman quoted in Wimmer 1989: 193). As in *First Blood*, Rambo appropriates the guerrilla methods of the Viet Cong – ambushes, booby-traps, sneaking around in the jungle – in order to defeat a very conventional-looking Vietnamese army (Sweeney 1999: 67-8). Through this visual imagery, 'Rambo turns history upside-down: in the real Vietnam War, it was the Americans who relied

upon their superior firepower, while the Vietcong fought with more primitive weapons and greater tactical skills' (Wimmer 1989: 190).

Having improved on Adam and Eve through 'tam[ing] original sin by killing a snake' (Wimmer 1989: 188), Rambo is associated with a number of tropes that refer to Christianity and, more specifically, Jesus. He is not merely a (super)hero – he is the messiah, the 'chosen one' (as he is referred to by one of the other CIA mercenaries). Both times that Rambo is tied up, he is wearing a loincloth and positioned as though crucified. Rambo is a Christ-like saviour figure, enduring torture with an 'almost messianic ability to endure pain' (Wimmer 1989: 188) in order to redeem the POWs' and spectators' sins (Sweeney 1999: 66). The torture scenes (after Rambo has been captured by the Vietnamese) are 'framed in the iconography of crucifixion shots with strong lighting on his head producing halo effects, as in medieval paintings, and the redder-than-blood producing a hyperrealisation... of heroic suffering' (Kellner 1995: 68; Sweeney 1999: 66). Rambo literally anoints himself with mud, and his use of the elements to defeat his enemies in the jungle involves emerging from water and fire as though these are mythic rites of purification (Jeffords 1989: 156) (similar to the Christian rite of baptism), thereby 'vicariously exorciz[ing] the demons of Vietnam plaguing [US] society' (Rasmussen, Downey and Asinas 2003: 150). After Rambo has purged the camp of enemies, he returns to the CIA base in Thailand and 'redeems America by searching out and destroying even greater sins and sinners' (Wimmer 1989: 189), in much the same way as the biblical story about Jesus throwing the money-lenders out of the temple.

Masculinity, Sado-masochism and the Spectacle of Violence

The only two women who appear in *Rambo II* are Co, Rambo's contact, and the prostitute at the POW camp. Both of these women are overtly sexualised, both through their connection with prostitution (Co passes as a prostitute in order to enter the camp) and, in Co's case, through her (brief) relationship with Rambo. Co is 'a handmaiden to Rambo's exploits who functions primarily as a seductive and destructive force' (Kellner 1995: 67). Although Co is coded superficially as a soldier, she is motivated by her 'admiration, sympathy, love for Rambo' rather than by her

military training (Waller 1990: 116). However, in order for Rambo to succeed, he cannot become attached to a woman; therefore, Co must – and does – die. In order to defeat Podovsky, Rambo must renounce women, sexuality and erotic pleasure (Kellner 1995: 67) because

> A warrior's masculinity is confirmed by battle against other men, and his valour is judged by male accomplices or superiors. Sexual relations with women do not confer manhood and are secondary to more essential relations with fellow warriors. The principal male enemy whom the paramilitary warrior kills in the final "duel" is often a far more intimate partner to the hero. (Gibson 1989: 24)

The films in the *Rambo* trilogy[12] 'display different stages in the historical development of a reconstructed US masculinity' (Jeffords 1994: 78-9). Rambo's relationship with Trautman at the end of *First Blood* is still one in which Rambo is subordinate to Trautman's military masculinity (Jeffords 1994: 79). By the end of *Rambo II*, however, Trautman has been defeated, signifying that his and 'Teasle's masculinity and the middle-class ethic he represents are no longer sufficient in a post-Vietnam' world (Jeffords 1994: 79). Specifically, in *Rambo II*, it may appear that the immediate motivation for Rambo's vengeance is Co's death, because of the way in which their relationship is given a visual prominence in the film. However, the scene which '*immediately* precedes the celebrated combat sequence' (Jeffords 1994: 83, original emphasis) is the one in which Trautman's authority is undermined by Murdock (the male, civilian leader of the US mission), rather than Co's death. Rambo's relationship with Co, however short-lived, demonstrates his heterosexuality (Waller 1990: 121), a necessary element of the narrative because of the potential subversion of a heterosexual coding by the spectacle of Stallone's naked figure and the film's apparent 'obsession with sadomasochism', through the various tortures inflicted upon his glistening flesh (Waller 1990: 121).

Narrative and spectacle work together to establish Rambo as both object (fetishised by the audience) and subject (with which the audience identifies). Long shots, and shots of Stallone from below, function to 'deify the character' (Kellner 1995: 68) while 'slow-motion travelling shots' make him into 'a force of nature effortlessly

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[12] In 2008, with the release of *Rambo*, the trilogy became a quadrilogy.

gliding through the jungle' (Kellner 1995: 67) and the cuts between shots 'create the impression of dynamism infusing Rambo with energy, superhuman power and vitality' (Kellner 1995: 68). These framing devices also code Rambo as a 'male sexual icon', a 'figure of virility' (Kellner 1995: 67). This is evident not only in the combat sequences but also in the shots of Rambo preparing (at the base in Thailand) for the mission, and has been noted in several critiques, which discuss the 'languid camera movements and fetishizing close-up' shots 'exhibiting Stallone's sculptured physique for the viewer's benefit and pleasure' (Studlar and Desser 1988: 15; see also Waller 1990: 121; Jackson 2003: 173) – as noted above, this is particularly the case during the sado-masochistic torture scenes. It is useful to explore the concept of sado-masochism in a bit more depth here, in order to unravel the ways in which this dynamic functions in the film's narrative and imagery.

Steve Neale draws on the work of D. N. Rodowick and Paul Willemen to argue that 'male' genres such as war films, Westerns and gangster movies 'constantly involve sado-masochistic themes, scenes and phantasies' (1983: 8) and that the 'repression of any explicit avowal of eroticism in the act of looking at the male seems structurally linked to a narrative content marked by [these] sado-masochistic phantasies and scenes' (12). He posits that sado-masochistic elements function as an attempt to 'disqualify' 'the male body... as an object of erotic contemplation and desire' (8). Both voyeuristic and fetishistic looking 'are especially evident... in those moments at which a narrative outcome is determined through a fight or gun-battle, at which male struggle becomes pure spectacle' 12). The following passage, in which Neale analyses the shoot-outs that occur in the films of Sergio Leone, could have been written about *Rambo II*:

> We are offered the spectacle of male bodies... We see male bodies stylised and fragmented by close-ups but our look is not direct, it is heavily mediated by the looks of the characters involved. And those looks are marked not by desire, but rather by fear, or hatred, or aggression... The [combat sequences] are moments of spectacle, points at which the narrative hesitates, comes to a momentary halt, but they are also points at which the drama is finally resolved, a suspense in the culmination of the narrative drive. They thus involve an imbrication of *both* forms of looking, their intertwining designed to minimise and displace the eroticism they each tend to involve. (Neale 1983: 14; original emphasis)

The sado-masochistic elements that Neale identifies as operating to repress the homoerotic dynamic of (desire in) the spectator's gaze, and of the gaze of characters at each other, are identifiably at work in *Rambo II*. Elements of Stallone/Rambo's naked body – his 'biceps... bulging pectorals and protruding Adam's apple' especially, (Jeffords 1989: 12) – are fetishised (presented for the audience's looking pleasure) throughout these sequences, but, crucially, he is shown to be active and omnipotent through the violence he perpetrates (rather than being overtly sexualised and passive, as women have often been represented in films, especially in musicals [Cohan 1993]). When Rambo is tortured, the audience experiences the pleasure of sadism as first Kinh and, later, Podovsky attempt to position Rambo in a feminised position of being looked-at and punished. At the same time, the spectatorial identification with Rambo's character makes this experience masochistic. The torture Rambo endures permits the audience to experience masochistic pain 'as just punishment for the guilt of the loss of masculinity and US imperial power in Vietnam' (Warner in Kellner 1995: 68).

However, these attempts/effects (to feminise Rambo/to 'punish' the audience) are only temporary. As soon as the tables have turned, and Rambo has broken free of his captors, the spectator's identification with Rambo, as he enacts his revenge, makes this combat sequence a pleasurable spectacle: 'the subject attains the pleasures of the sadistic position by participating in Rambo's mastery and power over his adversaries' (Kellner 1995: 68). It also reverses the earlier temporary coding, thereby emasculating Kinh, Podovsky and the other Vietnamese and Russian soldiers who are killed. Rambo 'cannot be controlled by the Russians, the Vietnamese, the audience or the camera' (Jeffords in Westwell 2006: 74). Through the spectacle of the violence enacted by Rambo, *Rambo II* 'provides a psychic resolution to the trauma of loss in Vietnam and empowers spectators' (Kellner 1995: 68). By inviting the audience to identify with/as Rambo, as he rescues the POWs, destroys the prison camp, kills the Vietnamese and the Russians, and returns to destroy the computer-banks and threaten Murdock with righteous anger, the film offers 'a fantasy in which the audience gets to violate the enemies of everyday life, the boss and his computerized control over work life, the bureaucrats and politicians' (Franklin 2000: 194).

Feminising Enemies

In contrast to Rambo's hypermasculine strength, military prowess, honour, individualism, focus and celibacy, the Vietnamese – whether the pirates or the soldiers – are feminised as physically weaker and militarily poor warriors, as treacherous, distracted and lecherous. They are portrayed as 'repulsive in their gratuitous cruelty and sexual lasciviousness' (Studlar and Desser 1988: 14), as criminals, as sexually perverted and as outside the boundaries of moral conduct (Gibson 1989: 23) - in short, they are defined by their deviance (Jackson 2003: 173). The scenes of combat with the Vietnamese 'depict the communists predominantly in long shots as insignificant and incompetent pawns in Rambo's redemptive heroism (Kellner 1995: 68). Moreover, the MIA storyline also 'gives credence to the view that the Vietnamese are now and *therefore have always been* an inhuman and cruel enemy. Vietnam's alleged actions in *presently* holding American prisoners serves as an index of our [the US's] essential rightness in fighting such an enemy *in the past*' (Studlar and Desser 1988: 12, original emphasis). The film thus 'rewrites history in a way that excuses American atrocities against the Vietnamese' (Ryan and Kellner 2002: 300). The pointlessness of the conflict as witnessed in *The Deer Hunter* (and *Apocalypse Now*) is given a new political content in the portrayal of the Vietnam War as a noble cause in *Rambo II*.

The Vietnamese are not the most important or formidable enemy in the film, though. They are being advised and commanded by a Russian Lieutenant Colonel. *Rambo II* also redeploys signifiers from World War II, transposing the stereotypes of the Japanese and the Germans from WWII imagery into the Vietnamese and Russians respectively (Kellner 1995: 67; McKeever 1989: 52; Wimmer 1989: 187). With their blond hair, blue eyes and accented English, the Russians look and sound like movie Nazis, and the Vietnamese wear Japanese-style military caps (Gibson 1989: 23). The Vietnamese 'even display certain typical Japanese vices (as they were 'portrayed' in war films), such as lechery and unmanly subservience to their Russian commanders' (Wimmer 1989: 188), while 'the Soviets are presented as sadistic torturers and

inhuman, mechanistic bureaucrats' (Kellner 1995: 67).[13] The 'higher status' attributed to the Russians is 'accentuated by the fact that they are more individuated than the Vietnamese' (McKeever 1989: 52). In keeping with the film's rewriting of history, there is absolutely no explanation of the Russians' presence, or why they command the Vietnamese, although Rambo appears unsurprised to see them (McKeever 1989: 52).

However, even the crack Russian military team are not the 'worst' enemies in the film (Jeffords 1989: 129). The hierarchy of enemies places the Vietnamese at the bottom, the Russians in the middle and, at the top, the US civilian government (Sweeney 1999: 67-8). From the very beginning of the film, as Murdock sweats in the Southeast Asian climate, he requires air-conditioning and a constant supply of chilled sodas – 'this is a man who, quite literally, cannot stand the heat' (Jackson 2003: 171). He is represented as weak, deceptive, sly, afraid, and passive, 'embod[ying] inactivity and voyeurism' (Wimmer 1989: 190) and also aligned with a 'wimpish' reliance on technology, surrounded by banks of computers and telling Rambo that he should let the technology do most of the work. All of these characteristics are coded feminine against Rambo's masculine honour and action. Murdock not only lies about his service history, he also denies responsibility for the war. As Rambo later learns from the POWs, the camp was supposed to be empty and Rambo's mission was most likely deliberately designed to fail.[14] When Rambo goes beyond 'success' in bringing back a live POW rather than pictures, Murdock aborts the mission, a decision which graphically symbolises the broader claim that civilian US leadership would not allow the soldiers to win.

Murdock 'is thus portrayed as a representative of a degenerate, over-technocratic and over-bureaucratic' government (Wimmer 1989: 189), a government that (1) double-crossed the Vietnamese government (by reneging on reparations to Vietnam); (2) is ignoring the plight of POWs; and (3) falsely blames the veteran for the loss of the Vietnam War. As an 'enemy of the bureaucrats and technology which

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[13] A visual contrast between Rambo, a Green Beret, and his enemies can also be seen in the red berets worn by the Vietnamese and the black berets worn by the Russians.
[14] See Appendix 3 for an account of how and why the mission was designed to avoid rather than find POWs.

seek to marginalise the individual soldier', Rambo's destruction of 'the banks of computers at the end of the film and the threat he issues to the bureaucrat Murdock confirm that Rambo is firmly identified with the individualism that Wayne stood for in his Westerns' (Taylor 2003: 144). In this context, the Vietnam War is reworked from a defeat by the Vietnamese into a self-defeat at the hands of a feminine civilian government and domestic society – something which, noticeably, the US can rectify (as opposed to defeat by the Vietnamese, which is irreversible). The Vietnam War was lost because of a passive Congress, bureaucratic micro-management by civil servants, the acquiescence of the Chiefs of Staff and other 'desk solders' in Washington, a hostile and treacherous media and the lack of support from the general public, rather than through the actions of the soldiers at the front line, or the ways in which they were fighting the war. In this view, combat troops were asked to fight 'with one hand tied behind their backs'.

Rambo II 'exonerates the regular soldier from culpability in American defeat' (Studlar and Desser 1988: 13) and proves that the US can return to its position of unparalleled global power (Taylor 2003: 144), by going all out to win next time. However, 'Vietnam has changed the myth: there is no longer an aversion to the basest forms of violence – Rambo does whatever it takes' (McKeever 1989: 54) – since it is perceived to have been civilian reluctance to fight the war 'properly' that caused the defeat. In returning to the jungle to free the POWs, Rambo's role is to 'win this time'. As he does so, he 'releases American society from the burden of understanding the historical, political and moral implications of Vietnam' (Wimmer 1989: 189; Westwell 2006: 76) and, specifically, the conduct of the US military in that conflict. The veteran is absolved of any responsibility for Vietnamese civilian suffering (Haines 1990: 89) and veneration of the veteran becomes the central focal point of US memory about Vietnam. The film 'effects a displacement of the question "Were we right to fight in Vietnam?" with the question "What is our obligation to the [American] veterans of the War?"' (Studlar and Desser 1988: 11). Responsibility to, and validation of, the veterans is not seen as a validation of participation in the conflict but criticism of the war is taken to be criticism of veterans. More than this, however, the displacement also erases any consideration of, or responsibility for, the effects of the war on the peoples and terrain of Southeast Asia.

Conclusion

What *The Deer Hunter* began, and hinted at, *Rambo II* attempts – although, ultimately, I argue, unsuccessfully – to complete: the remasculinisation of the US state and people after the trauma of Vietnam. (It is worth nothing that while both films demonise the Vietnamese enemy, the 'real' problem to be overcome/enemy to be dealt with, in order to effect this remasculinisation, lies at home.) Where *The Deer Hunter* required the participation of (marginalised) women in this project, *Rambo II* instead deploys the strategy of feminisation to marginalise those who might otherwise have been expected to occupy the hegemonic masculine subject position – namely, (figures that represent) the US government (in addition to feminising the Vietnamese and hypermasculinising the Russian soldiers). However, the participation of women is still crucial to the narrative in *Rambo II*, since the character of Co functions to divert attention from the homoerotic subtext at play in the film (as, indeed, it is in *The Deer Hunter*).

Nevertheless, although the narrative and visual images attempt to disavow the homoerotic gaze in *Rambo II*, this cannot be entirely eliminated from the spectatorial experience and is, therefore, an ultimately problematic representational strategy. The audience is positioned as feminised by the film and the sado-masochistic elements used to establish Rambo's hypermasculinity appear as an hysterical overreaction to the emasculation effected by the Vietnam War. The film's narrative does not demonstrate any of the masculine bonding that other Vietnam War films of the same era portrayed as central to the Vietnam experience, and there is nothing about the character of John Rambo that suggests he is any better placed to reintegrate into US society in this film than he was at the end of *First Blood*. *Rambo II* has an entirely 'international' focus: we never see John Rambo hold down a job, raise a family or engage in other normal 'domestic' activities, for example. Male audiences may be able to identify temporarily with Rambo but the extreme physical hypermasculinity of the character is unattainable for most men and it is not possible to find a workable, 'realistic' model of US masculinity within the film, which, more than anything, was what was needed in the aftermath of the trauma of Vietnam.

Along with an array of cheaper, less high-profile copies with similar narratives, such as *Uncommon Valor* (1983), *Missing In Action* (1984), and *Missing In Action II* (1985), *Rambo II* functions as a symbolic ending and, moreover, as a surrogate victory for the US in Vietnam. It regenerates American manhood and, more specifically, American military masculinity, by clearly demonstrating that it is not the individual veteran's fault that the US lost the war in Vietnam. I have demonstrated how the film offers a reaffirmation of the American male and a concomitant rejection of everything feminine – in this case, most strikingly, of the US government, which has been feminised as responsible for the loss of the war, being depicted as passive, weak and treacherous. Rambo deploys the generic conventions of the Western hero as a strategy of remasculinisation in the international sphere but, in the post-Vietnam era, this remasculinisation still appears incomplete:[15] the fetishisation of the hypermasculine body appears as an hysterical over-reaction and is itself a 'problem' that will require further narrative iterations to overcome. In the next chapter, I explore how *Forrest Gump* addresses some of these issues.

[15] (Re)masculinisation is, of course, never a 'finished' process – it has to be continually reiterated (Jeffords 1989).

Chapter 6: *Forrest Gump*

Introduction

Forrest Gump, the first post-Cold War box-office hit to deal with the Vietnam War,[1] was the most successful film of 1994, taking more than US$330 million gross and winning six Academy Awards (IMDb Pro, no date). *Forrest Gump* interweaves fictional scenes with archival footage from newsreels of famous events in order to tell the narrative, largely in flashback, of one man's unusual life in the United States, from his birth during World War II to the early/mid-1980s. There is a wealth of material – characters, events and narrative structures – to analyse in *Forrest Gump* because the film touches on so many important moments and movements in recent US social and political history.

The structure of this chapter is as follows: I begin by summarising key features of the source material for the film, namely, Winston Groom's novel (1994 [1986]), in order to highlight how its representations contrast quite dramatically with the representations and narrative structure of the film, which are then explored in the subsequent six analytical sections. In the first of these, I outline the many facets of Forrest's character that combine to make him emblematic of a hegemonic discourse of American masculinity. In the second section, I reflect on the film in the context of the demise of the Western as the dominant myth for representing US identity in (the aftermath of) the Vietnam War. Thereafter, I analyse the ways in which race, and a racialized understanding of the US in the 1960s and 1970s, is portrayed in the film (section four), followed by a discussion of the film's representation of the Vietnam War and its aftermath (section five), before turning to an examination of gender at work in the film (section six). Specifically, in this last section, I interrogate the representations of the character of Jenny and of the domestic sphere, and contrast these with Forrest's hegemonic 'new man' model of masculinity (one which looks

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[1] The final film in Oliver Stone's Vietnam trilogy, *Heaven and Earth* (1993) (a cinematic rendering of aspects of author Le Ly Hayslip's autobiographical *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* [Hayslip with Wurts 1989], about growing up in Vietnam, marrying a US officer and moving to the US) did not do particularly well at the US box office, perhaps because of its (supposedly) subaltern (and female) perspective and non-combat focus.

suspiciously similar to a 1950s model of masculinity into which Forrest is born), in order to demonstrate the binary logic of gender that underpins the film's narrative structure.

Relevant Context: *Forrest Gump*, the Novel

The opening line of Winston Groom's novel about a self-confessed 'halfwit' – 'bein a idiot is no box of chocolates' (Groom 1994: 9) – indicates the almost complete opposition between the film and the book, since in the film (in a now-famous quote), Forrest comments that 'life is like a box of chocolates'. Although the novel is narrated in the first person, as is much of the film, very little of Groom's writing of Forrest made the transition into Eric Roth's screenplay.[2] Specifically, for the purposes of this thesis, it is important to note the differences in representations of Forrest himself and of his (sexual) relationship with Jenny, and in his experiences of and opinions about the Vietnam War.

In Groom's original narrative, Forrest displays traits associated with *idiots savants*: unique musical and mathematical capabilities. These abilities lead him into a variety of outlandish and idiosyncratic adventures, which do not mirror in any close way the social upheavals portrayed in the film: national political events in the novel are thus more obliquely referenced. However, novel-Forrest reflects explicitly on his life and, in his narration, is critical (in both the analytical and the negative sense) of his circumstances and especially of the Vietnam War and about those people who influence his life. Forrest is a complex character, who articulates specific, and often contradictory, interests and desires. He also notes his own flaws, and others (upon which he does not comment) can be discerned by the reader. His account of his own agency is thus both clearer and more clearly problematised and politicised, and his account is self-reflexively presented as subjective.

The Forrest of the original book uses coarse, crude and even racist language (he refers to the Vietnamese as gooks), swears frequently, is sexually active and is also

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[2] Groom's use of first-person narration throughout the novel highlights Forrest's poor grammar, spelling and punctuation. All quotes from the novel in this chapter preserve the original (incorrect) spellings.

clearly aware of his own sexual(ised) identity. This much is first evident during his time at high school, when he comments that 'there was a lady who was teachin me how to read. Jus the two of us. She was real nice an pretty and more'n once or twice I had nasty thoughts about her' (16). He also describes Jenny as 'all growed up now, with pretty black hair an she was long-legged an had a beautiful face, an they was other things too, I dare not mention' (16). One of the female boarders who lives in the Gump house engages him in sexual activity, giving him 'an entirely new outlook on things for the future... on account [of which] I got up the courage to axe my mama what to do about Jenny' (25).

Novel-Forrest's account of his experiences in the Army and, more specifically, in Vietnam, are three-dimensional in comparison with film-Forrest's – or, rather, the audience is able to hear Forrest's own opinion, as opposed to his being silenced on this issue. In the Army, 'they do not complain that you is dumb or stupid like coaches do – they is more interested in your private parts or bowel movements, an so always precede they yellin with something like "dickhead" or "asshole"' (49). In addition to his (gendered) critique of military training, he also reflects explicitly on the economic inequalities he witnesses. The people he sees upon his arrival in Vietnam live in 'sad little shanties worse than anything I seen back in Alabama, with folks huddled neath cloth leanto's an they ain't got no teeth and they children ain't got no clothes an basically, they is beggars' (55). Of dead fellow GIs, he notes that 'They is hardly recognizable as people – all mangled up like they has been stuffed thru a cotton baler or something. I ain't never seen nobody dead, an it is the most horrible and scary thing that ever happen to me, afore or since!' (56). His time in Vietnam is not in the least pleasant: his first nights there are spent lying in foxholes 'filled waist stinkin deep with slimy ole water' (56) and, later, a cesspit, while the military compound is fired upon (he has the misfortune of arriving just in time for the 1968 Tet Offensive). He witnesses the explosion of a US helicopter, 'a dreadful sight, people set on fire an all, an nothing we could do' (58).

It is evident from Forrest's narration that 'winning' the war is secondary to survival for the men in his platoon but it is also not at all clear (to them or to the reader) what victory might look like. Crucially, Forrest understands that there are not always

simple answers to complex issues and that information can be spun for political purposes. For example, he comments that he is in:

> Charlie Company which is either pinned down by the gooks or has got the gooks pinned down, dependin on whether you get your news from the Stars an Stripes or by just lookin around and seein what the hell is goin on. (58)

He finds his sergeant's commands to be 'absurd' (60) and during a fire-fight, in which they are pinned down with VC between them and the rest of their platoon, he surmises that 'Best thing we coulda done then was to try an make friends with em an forget all this other shit, but that were not on the cards' (62). At one point, a US bomber drops napalm on their position, burning and killing the troops around him, which, he believes, has frightened the Vietnamese soldiers away: 'They must of figgered that if we was willing to do that to ourselves, then what the hell would we of done to *them*?' (68, original emphasis). Forrest also has his own opportunity to give a very clear indictment of the American war in Vietnam to a US audience: despite an attempt by the US Army to use Forrest (now a war hero) as a recruiting tool, during which he is supposed to say only 'Join the Army an fight for your freedom', when asked what he thinks of the war, he states that it is 'a bunch of shit', which sends the crowd 'wild, jumpin up an down an cheerin' (83).

Some elements of Forrest's Vietnam experiences recounted in the book resonate with the representations in the film: when he catches up with Bubba in Vietnam,[3] they become close and Bubba comes up with the idea of the two of them starting a shrimping boat business together. Forrest does rescue his platoon and get shot in the behind (later being awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, when he moons LBJ). However, when, in the novel, Bubba, shot and dying, asks him 'Fuck it, Forrest, why this happen?', instead of replying with a tautology, (as he does in the film: 'you got shot'), Forrest writes 'Well, what in hell am I gonna say?' (66), thereby acknowledging the inadequacy of any answer he might be able to provide. The now-famous line which Forrest repeats on more than one occasion (in the film) – 'that's all I got to say 'bout that' – applies here, not to the war in general but, specifically, to

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[3] In the novel, Forrest first meets Bubba, a white Southerner, at college. In the film, Bubba is African-American, and he and Forrest first meet after their enlistment in the Army.

Bubba's death in Vietnam. Forrest searches out Bubba's family in Bayou Le Batre, where Bubba's father asks him

> "what do you think Bubba died for? ... What I mean is, why? Why was we over there?" I thought for a minute, an say, "Well, we was tryin to do the right thing, I guess. We was jus doin what we was tole." An he say, "Well, do you think it was worth it? What we did? All them boys getting kilt that way?" "An I says, "Look, I am jus a idiot, see. But if you want my real opinion, I think it was a bunch of shit." Bubba's daddy nod his head. "That's what I figgered," he say. (213)

In terms of emotional relationships, Forrest becomes romantically and sexually involved with Jenny when she asks him to have sex with her, during a period in which she is depressed as a result of a recent break-up. In perhaps the starkest contrast with the film, their sexual encounters are much more fulfilling for both of them. It is worth quoting this section at length because of the gendered importance of this contrast:

> When we get home, Jenny begun takin off her clothes, She is down to her underpants, an I am jus settin on the couch tryin not to notice, but she come up an stand in front of me an she say, "Forrest, I wan you to fuck me now." You coulda knocked me down with a feather! I jus set there an gawked up at her. Then she set down nex to me an started foolin with my britches, an nex thing I knowed, she'd got off my shirt an was huggin and kissin me an all. At first, it was jus a little odd, her doin all that. Course I had dreamed bout it all along, but I had not expected it quite this way. But then, well I guess somethin come over me, an it didn't matter what I'd expected, cause we was rollin aroun on the couch an had our clothes nearly off an then Jenny pulled down my undershorts an her eyes get big an she say, "Whooo – lookit what you got there!" an she grapped me jus like Miz French had that day... Well, we done all sorts of things that afternoon that I never even dreamt of in my wildest imagination. Jenny shown me shit I never could of figgered out on my own – sidewise, crosswise, upside down, bottomwise, lengthwise, dogwise, standin up, settin down, bendin over, leanin back, inside-out and outside in – only way we didn't try it was apart! ... When we is finally finished, Jenny jus lie there a wile, an then she look at me an say' "Goddamn, Forrest, where is you *been* all my life?"' (102-3, original emphasis)

Forrest and Jenny pursue an on-again-off-again relationship that is very clearly a partnership of equals. At the very end of the novel, Forrest considers trying to win back Jenny, who has given birth to his son, but decides that 'the more I think about this, the more I finally understand it cannot work. And also, I cannot rightly blame it

on my bein a idiot – tho that would be nice. Nope, it is jus one of them things' (237). Jenny goes on to raise his son with another man, while Forrest himself is homeless, but seemingly having found some peace with himself. His character is at various times assertive, passive, emotional, rational – a complex composite of working class masculinity and other marginalised attributes that mark him as anything but an ideal of hegemonic American masculinity in the Cold War era.

Forrest and Hegemonic Masculinity

At first glance, film-Forrest also appears to be the antithesis of dominant US constructions of masculinity: born in the rural Alabaman backwater town of Greenbow, and raised by his single parent mother, Forrest is diagnosed with a curved spine as a child, forcing him to wear leg braces – a handicap that is compounded by his lower-than-average IQ of 75. However, through maternal sacrifice (when Forrest is a child, his mother sleeps with the principal of the local school in order to ensure Forrest has 'the same opportunities as everybody else') Forrest comes to exemplify all of the ideals of both pre- and post-Vietnam-era hegemonic masculinity, through his build and physical strength, through his combat service and the other social, political and economic roles he adopts, and through raising a family.

In his discussion of the recruitment of the 'best and the brightest' personnel in the Kennedy Administration, Robert Dean (1998) outlines 'a composite picture of the ideal "New Frontiersman": one who had performed brilliantly as a scholar and an athlete at an Ivy League university, who had been decorated for bravery during service as a junior officer in the Second World War, and who had gone on to serve the nation through brilliant "establishment" careers in government, academia, law, and banking' (Alsop in Dean 1998: 31). In his own unique way, Forrest fulfils all of these criteria: having performed brilliantly (for an 'idiot') by graduating from high school and from university, he also makes it on to the 'All American' football team. A war hero who rescued his entire platoon during an ambush, he is decorated for bravery in Vietnam with the highest award possible, the Congressional Medal of Honor. He plays a crucial role in domestic politics (desegregating the University of Alabama and causing the exposure of the Watergate scandal) and as an international

statesman, participating as the key speaker in an anti-war rally in Washington, DC, and playing table-tennis in China (world peace through triangular diplomacy).

Forrest is also an advertising icon, an entrepreneur (shrimp-boat captain) and (with the help of Lieutenant Dan) an astute investor, while retaining a humble, (literally) 'down-to-earth' manual labour job – mowing the Greenbow school field, which he does for free. Forrest's love of running (a non-aggressive representation of hypermasculine physical strength) demonstrates his 'Pioneer spirit', and he is a devout member of the Bayou La Batre Foursquare Baptist Church choir, as well as a countercultural spiritual leader (through his inspirational running). He is a benefactor and philanthropist, donating huge sums of money to local worthy causes (the Baptist Church gets a new roof, and the Bayou La Batre fishing hospital a new 'Forrest Gump Medical Center'). By the end of the film, Forrest's hegemonic masculinity is reinforced by his success as a partner to Jenny and through his virility and wisdom as a father to Forrest Junior.

Forrest is perhaps unable to comprehend the social meanings of events, but he nevertheless – and unavoidably – has a point of view. His perspective on personal, local and international events is not one in which he finds war frightening or immoral, for example. However, by presenting his character as apolitical, ahistorical, and universal, the film is able to function as a palimpsest, a reinscription of history (Byers 1996: 421). Forrest's 'very incapacity to analyze or interpret events makes him a fit figure for the subject who has a stake in not grasping them' (425). He embodies an unchanging (hegemonic model of) masculinity and the distillation of All-American 'straight' cultural values. Forrest is the pivot around which all other characters (r)evolve, a catalyst who stimulates their emotional development while remaining constant himself. Impervious to social change he is an almost Messiah-like figure, 'a holy innocent' (Burgoyne 1997: 116), whose redemptive function reunites the US nation in a singular (re)interpretation of the events of the 1960s and 1970s. Through Forrest, the film is able to 'reorder the past in such a way that the political and social ruptures of the sixties can be reclaimed as sites of national identification' (107).

Forrest Gump: Not a Western[4]

Unlike the previous two films discussed in this thesis, *Forrest Gump* is not a Western. Indeed, one of the interesting features about *Forrest Gump*, according to its director, Robert Zemeckis, is that the film doesn't have any typical plot devices: the eponymous lead character is not pursuing any quest and there is no bad guy to be beaten before a final narrative resolution (DVD commentary 2001). The 'glue' to this very successful movie is the love story, a feature which earlier scriptwriters and incarnations of the screenplay had failed to demonstrate to Zemeckis's satisfaction.[5] *Forrest Gump* is one of the few Vietnam War films to contain such a prominent romantic relationship. Zemeckis informs the audience that 'I look for characters who have to go through a character arc... characters who undergo a change... that character proves the premise of your movie' (DVD commentary). What is particularly notable about *Forrest Gump* in the context of this comment is that the character of Forrest never changes. By Zemeckis's own admission, the characters who experience the turbulent changes portrayed in the film are Forrest's eventual wife, Jenny, and his commanding officer in Vietnam, Lieutenant Dan. However, *Forrest Gump* does draw on more recent national myths about US identity (and, as described above, certain aspects of Forrest's masculinity very clearly draw on the notion of the Western frontiersman).

Thomas Byers begins his (1996) analysis of *Forrest Gump* with a discussion of the narrated flashback in which Forrest recounts the period after Jenny left him (just after the US bicentennial celebrations), when he ran across the US a number of times. Forrest claims that he ran 'for no particular reason', yet a short while later, Forrest claims that he was running to put the past behind him, thereby acknowledging a specific historical project: overcoming trauma (424). Byers demonstrates how this double account mirrors the double accounts of the film's meaning that have been publicly articulated by, on the one hand, US politician and

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[4] This section and subsequent sections draw substantially on Thomas Byers' (1996) analysis of the film.

[5] According to Wendy Finerman, Zemeckis's (then) wife, she brought the original novel to Zemeckis's attention when it was initially published in 1986, but difficulties translating the novel into a screenplay meant that filming did not begin until the early 1990s (DVD Commentary).

Speaker of the House of Representatives, Newt Gingrich, who claimed that *Forrest Gump* was '"a conservative film"' that revealed that the counterculture, which developed out of the 1960s, '"destroys human beings and basic values"' (quoted in Byers 1996: 420). In response, *Forrest Gump*'s producer, Steve Tisch, explicitly rejected any political interpretation of the film, arguing that *Forrest Gump* '"isn't about politics or conservative values. It's about humanity, it's about respect, tolerance, and unconditional love"' (quoted in Byers 1996: 420). *Forrest Gump* is thus claimed to be an apolitical film, while, as is demonstrated below, effecting a thorough-going revisionist account of the social, political and cultural dynamics at work in the US during the Cold War (419, 421).

The film-makers repeatedly emphasise on the DVD commentary that Forrest has no agenda, no point of view, and therefore no stake in the struggles that are depicted in the film:

> He's like a baby, so he has no agenda, so you take what he says at face value which is what allows the story to work...
>
> You're able to take him through all the events of the movie without having a point of view that would destroy these scenes...
>
> If Forrest Gump didn't have an IQ that was below normal, you couldn't tell this story...
>
> Forrest walked that tightrope right in the middle where he never got hung up on all the things that we all did so that the rights and the wrongs that we might have been defending...
>
> ...he didn't have a perspective on them...
>
> ...if he *had* had a perspective on them and had an opinion when he got into a situation, uh, then the movie wouldn't have worked. He couldn't have done the scene with Wallace if he didn't misunderstand the situation and many of the scenes to come. (DVD commentary)[6]

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[6] There are three commentaries on the DVD. One of these includes three male participants (director Robert Zemeckis, producer Steve Starkey and production designer Rick Carter), which, at times, makes it difficult to identify the speaker. I have therefore reproduced elements of their conversation, here and below, without specific attribution to any particular individual.

> Forrest's inability to comprehend the social and political nature of events is made into an Archimedean standpoint from which he becomes, as stated in the blurb on the back of the DVD, the 'everyman' of his generation, the universal subject and objective narrator of his-story. The hegemonic American subject, white, male, heterosexual and middle-class,[7] on whose behalf history is repressed and rewritten in *Forrest Gump*, is, through this repression and rewriting, not required to comprehend this position of privilege, or in any way renounce it (Byers 1996: 430).

The demise of US economic dominance, internationally, and of men's capacity to provide for their families as sole breadwinners, domestically, combined with challenges to the nuclear family from new social movements, all represented threats to conventional masculinity during the turbulent decades of the 1960s and 1970s. These social movements highlighted the ways in which the norms and values of the hegemonic American subject functioned to oppress women, non-heterosexuals and people of colour, thus (temporarily) destabilising its hegemonic power and 'othering' the white American male for a time. In *Forrest Gump*, those characteristics which were challenged by these social movements are, in part, associated with/attributed to older models of masculinity (such as the old men in the barbershop in Alabama, or the football coach at the university), and superseded (in the character of Forrest) by a 'new man' model of masculinity, a subjectivity which appears responsible for none of these forms of oppression against minorities (Byers 1996: 424). The negative traits of masculinity are also overwhelmingly inscribed onto racial others, as we shall see in the next section, while white men's anxiety about the loss of masculinity is shown through the character of Lieutenant Dan, who also comes to embody (with Forrest's help) a 'new man' model of masculinity. As a result of this repudiation of privilege and reinscription of negative characteristics onto other 'others', the traditional gendered hierarchy is re-established, with man's dominance restored and women's liberation once again subordinated (424) (discussed in the final analytical section, on gender, below).

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[7] Although Forrest may not immediately appear middle-class, his trajectory, as outlined in the previous section, clearly marks him as such: from a property-owning family, he graduates from college and becomes a very successful small-businessman and philanthropist.

Race: The KKK, Bubba, and the Civil Rights Movement

The elision of racial difference and the eradication of racial conflict from American history are enacted at various points during the film, beginning early on with Forrest's account of his namesake, General Nathan Bedford Forrest (civil war hero and one of the founders of the Ku Klux Klan). Forrest's inability to comprehend racism is first evident in this scene: his only awareness of the KKK is a men's 'club' with the rather odd habit of dressing themselves and their horses up as 'ghosts' and 'spooks' in white bed sheets, and he sounds baffled when he states that 'sometimes we all do things that, well, just don't make no sense'. The visual imagery – taken from D. W. Griffiths' 1915 film, *Birth of a Nation* – does not link the KKK, directly or indirectly, with racial hatred or with violence. While this scene can be read as an implicit critique of the KKK, it also effects a portrayal of the Klan as a comic, rather than dangerous and violent, social movement in US history.

This simultaneous recognition and disavowal of white racism ensures that it becomes 'something so incomprehensible as to empty it of historical significance' (Byers 1996: 428). Forrest's inability to comprehend racism as 'making sense' in American history seems at odds with his historical background, having grown up in post-WWII Alabama in a boarding house with black maids but only ever white guests (as Wang comments, there is 'nary a "whites only" sign in Forrest's memory of the segregated South' [2000: 97]). Although Forrest claims that his mother has a way of explaining things so that they make sense, he never refers to an instance of her explaining racism to him, in either a racist or non-racist way. He appears to comprehend the language of racism (see the discussion of the desegregation of the University of Alabama, below) but does not comment on it at all, to support or to question it. Crucially, Forrest misunderstands the word 'coon' as referring to raccoons, yet he also displays a knowledge and understanding of the meaning of the word 'nigger', although where he might have learnt such language is never discussed, nor are the reasons for his avoidance of the term in his own discourse. He does not articulate an opinion on its usage, neither agreeing with nor berating or otherwise indicating a problem with the student who uses it in conversation.

Throughout the film there are a series of scenes where Forrest usurps or supplants the agency of African Americans. He dances for Elvis Presley (one of the guests in the boarding house), and is thus implicated in the phenomenal success of a white musician performing a 'black' style of music. Much later in the film, when Forrest has travelled to Washington DC to meet his third US president (this time Richard Nixon), he is shown to be responsible for uncovering the Watergate scandal, symbolically supplanting the black night-watchman who discovered the intruders (Byers 1996: 441). As Burgoyne argues, Forrest's

> insertion into archival images of a defining historical moment suggests a kind of reconciliation, a healing acceptance, one prompted, however, not by an understanding of the history of racial oppression but rather by a lack of understanding, by an absence of historical knowledge. (1997: 109)

During the scenes at the University of Alabama, Forrest is symbolically (re)presented as responsible for the desegregation of the university by being the first white person to follow the newly enrolled black students through the front door of the establishment (after turning and waving to the news cameras). This scene is the only scene in the film to deal directly with the civil rights movement but the achievements of the civil rights movement are thus not represented as having anything to do with the bravery and sacrifice of African-Americans. In this way the film simultaneously 'appropriates the Civil Rights movement and denies white racism' (Rogin in Kinney 2003: 382). Governor Wallace is distanced from the racial component of this issue, as the only part of his speech that we hear is his warning about the US's potential slide towards military dictatorship, and the film shows the audience applauding his speech. It is one of only a handful of occasions upon which overtly political argument is heard in the film and it is even more noteworthy that 'while Wallace's voice and politics are recuperated for the contemporary audience, those of a southern white leader who was substantially more progressive on Civil Rights' – i.e., President Carter – are nowhere to be heard in *Forrest Gump* (Byers 1996: 430).

One of the threads running through the film is the (attempted or successful) assassinations of famous figures in American history: Wallace, John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan and John Lennon are all explicitly mentioned by Forrest. Since Forrest does not contextualise these events as in any

way connected with social or political events, these figures become equated through their martyrdom, victims of crazy people and a crazy world, with the political import of each event being erased (Byers 1996: 427). Byers also notes that all of these were 'actual or aspiring heirs to the position of the "Father of the Nation"', with the exception of John Lennon, who is presented in the film as an (apolitical) father, as opposed to being depicted in his role a prominent peace activist (427). But perhaps even more notable are the two absences from the list of prominent assassinations: those of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King.

The assassination of Wallace is devoted the most time in the film, while Malcolm X is 'too radical' a figure to be included as a victim. The omission of any mention of the assassination of Martin Luther King makes less sense, since it does not fit as well with Forrest's character, who

> is portrayed both as prone to discuss assassinations and as highly sympathetic toward and disposed to identify with Southern Blacks. This is the film's most striking erasure of a single historical event, and I think it can only be understood symptomatically, as produced by the wish to attach victim status to white men and the concomitant need to cover over any systematic exploitation of others by them. (Byers 1996: 428)[8]

Interestingly, one of the deleted scenes discussed on the DVD is an episode in which Forrest meets King and assists his group of civil rights marchers by diverting the attention of the Alsatian dogs that have been let loose by the police to attack them. As a scene, despite fitting into the narrative mould of Forrest's influencing key historical events, it is distinct from the other scenes which function in this way, because it graphically highlights state-sanctioned oppression of, and violence against, black US citizens (and, moreover, in a non-humorous way, unlike the other scenes in the film). It would also have functioned to demonstrate the bravery of, and risk-taking by, African-Americans that was so essential to the success of the civil rights movement.

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[8] I argue below that the same omission of historical events and movements occurs with regard to the erasure of any aspect of feminism/feminists/women's liberation.

When Forrest enlists in the army in the early 1960s, his first and best friend is Bubba, a black man also from Alabama who appears to suffer the same 'slowness' (and innocence/lack of social awareness) as Forrest. Like Forrest, Bubba never mentions racism either, and Forrest does not mention any racial animosity from other soldiers during their training, implying that it is a happy time for both of them (the drill sergeant is also black). Throughout basic training and Vietnam, Bubba and Forrest are inseparable. Thus, after Forrest's desegregating actions at the University of Alabama, racism is no longer shown to be a social or political concern – and, above all, not in the US military. When the platoon is attacked on a routine patrol, Bubba is fatally wounded, and in the process of trying to save him, Forrest saves all of the other members of the platoon. Forrest can't answer Bubba's question ('why'd this happen?') in such a way as to explain to Bubba *why* his death has occurred; he can only restate the factual event ('you got shot'). In this way, the reasons for military intervention in Indochina and the higher-than-average rates of African American conscription, injuries and fatalities need never be discussed or considered (Byers 1996: 430).

From this time forward in the diegesis, Forrest replaces Bubba by living out all of Bubba's dreams. Having discussed going into the shrimping business together, Forrest decides to continue with this plan after Bubba's death, becoming the primary breadwinner for Bubba's family (ultimately giving Bubba's mother the financial independence to quit her job as a cook and have a white woman cook for her), and joining the choir of the local black gospel church. After all of the other shrimp boats on the bayou (a predominantly black industry) are destroyed in Hurricane Carmen, Forrest becomes the only shrimper still in business, making a fortune, which he donates to two local black causes, the church and the medical centre, becoming the town's wealthy benefactor and philanthropist – another way in which racial segregation is elided in the film.

Aside from the archival footage of George Wallace during desegregation, described above, the only other explicit reference to racial conflict is in a scene involving the Black Panthers. The difference between the portrayals of Bubba and the Black Panther Forrest meets at a party is clear: 'the *good* Black man is the softspoken

apolitical friend to whites who dies for America; the bad ones are the violent loudmouths who refuse to do this, and whose opposition is coded as criminality' (Byers 1996: 431, emphasis added). The Black Panthers look and act like hysterical hypermasculine gang members, being articulated as aggressive and as violently opposed to the war in Vietnam, represented above all through the semi-visible images and slogans on the walls of the Black Panther house and by the Black Panther who delivers a loud and impassioned rant about why he refuses to fight for a racist country. The audience is left to interpret the dramatic irony of Forrest being lectured on racism by this man (who appears to have avoided the draft) after Forrest has been best friends with a black man who died fighting for his country. The context of the Black Panther's rant at Forrest indicates that we are not supposed to bother listening to or evaluating his angry statements, since Forrest is focused entirely on the argument between Jenny and her boyfriend Wesley, to the extent that the Black Panther's voice can only be half-heard. Forrest comprehends the Black Panthers no more clearly than he does the KKK; both become, for him and for the audience, things that 'just make no sense', which discursively links these two very different social movements as equal, and as equally dangerous political extremists.

Vietnam/Lieutenant Dan

The Vietnam scenes from *Forrest Gump* recall the helicopters of *Apocalypse Now* (1979), and the male bonding of *Platoon* (1986) and *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), and the post-Vietnam scenes with paraplegic Dan evoke similar scenes from Ron Kovic's biopic, *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989). Another layer of intertextuality with other Vietnam films is provided by Dale Dye, a former captain in the US Army and now an actor and advisor to the film industry on military realism, to 'train' the actors for the combat scenes – to demonstrate to them what the war was 'really' like and familiarise them with the training and operations that their characters would have endured.[9] The first scene 'in country' invokes much of the iconography that has come to stand for the Vietnam War in cultural texts and popular memory: helicopters, palm

[9] Captain Dye (Ret.) has acted as military advisor/consultant on several other Vietnam War films, including *Platoon* (1986), *84 Charlie MoPic* (1989), *Casualties of War* (1989), *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989), *Jacob's Ladder* (1990), *Heaven and Earth* (1993), *Tigerland* (1999), *Rules of Engagement* (2000), and the recent comic spoof *Tropic Thunder* (2008) (IMDb, no date).

trees, the ocean, the music, fatigues and dog-tags, card-games and BBQs, oil-drums, sandbags and bunkers. All of this imagery works to fulfil the film-makers' aim to 'convey Vietnam not just as a place but [as] a concept' (DVD commentary). In effect, *Forrest Gump* '"samples" the Vietnam genre and converts it to a different message' (Burgoyne 1997: 110).

Throughout the time Forrest and Bubba are in Vietnam, neither the characters nor the audience actually see any Vietnamese people, despite Forrest's description of their role in Vietnam as 'always looking for this guy named Charlie'. He never mentions encountering any other Vietnamese, or what his (or other American soldiers') feelings were towards them, yet it is highly unlikely that he could have been in Vietnam for a (minimum) twelve-month tour of duty without encountering any Vietnamese soldiers or civilians. This was a deliberate strategy by Robert Zemeckis, who chose never to show 'the enemy' (or any South Vietnamese civilians) in the Vietnam scenes. Belying all of the comments about how Forrest has no point of view, Zemeckis claims 'I wanted it to only be from Forrest's point of view so, in other words, you never cut to the VC lying in wait' (DVD commentary). Zemeckis contrasts his own feelings about the war with Forrest's:

> though of course we all have our own feelings, about how we felt about the war and of course, Forrest is going to a place that he doesn't have any idea about at all and so we're bringing, to, to the party, all of our own understanding and feelings about it and once again Forrest, in his innocence, doesn't have any of those feelings. (DVD commentary)

The notion that we comprehend Vietnam from Forrest's (lack of) point of view is crucial to the film's attempt to rewrite the politics and history of US involvement in the conflict, since it is clear from the anti-war protest scene in Washington, DC, that Forrest *does* have (personal) feelings about the war. In a deliberate omission from the film, that is as significant as the absence of feminism to the narrative function (and which highlights the interconnectedness of gender and war), Forrest is completely silenced on the issue of the war (by the US military officer who attempts to sabotage the sound system during the event), so that the tens of thousands in the audience, along with the film's audience, never find out how Forrest perceives or understands the war, the enemy, or his own or his country's actions in Vietnam. In

this way, the film ostensibly presents the audience with a 'disinterested', neutral account of the Vietnam War: by keeping Forrest's feelings out of it, and presenting him as a supposedly impartial observer – one who is 'outside' or 'beyond' politics, through his inability to comprehend 'the social'. Forrest, who has lived through some very specific and particular life-changing experiences (not only, but perhaps most profoundly, in Vietnam), does not seem to be affected by his time in combat, or in the US military and is thus still able to appear as a universal hegemonic model of masculinity within the narrative.

Forrest's speech must nevertheless be impressive and/or eloquent, since it moves the Abbie Hoffmann figure and others to tears, and, given their reactions, one is left to assume that the content was at least compatible with, if not a direct expression of, an anti-war position. However, Forrest's (silent) speech is quickly overshadowed by his reunion with Jenny:

> The anti-war rally turns into a Hollywood audience, cheering the boy-gets-girl-back... story. This scene gives Vietnam veterans what they are widely believed to have never had: both a personal and a public welcome home... The larger political lesson is that women do have a key role to play in ending the war: by bringing home the soldiers in a loving embrace rather than any unfeminine attempts at organized action. (Kinney 2003: 383)[10]

Almost immediately after this scene, we see the direct contrast between Forrest and Jenny's boyfriend, Wesley (mirroring the contrast between Bubba and the Black Panther). The violence of the Black Panther's speech, and Wesley's physical violence against Jenny, rewrites the feminisation (in earlier Vietnam representation) of those who opposed the war with an aggressive and unrestrained hypermasculinity. Wesley's half-hearted apology/excuse to Jenny later, in which he blames 'this war and that, that lying sonofabitch Johnson', also inverts the popular stereotype of the violent and out-of-control veteran suffering from PTSD. When Forrest claims that 'some of America's finest young men' died in Vietnam, the comparison with Wesley is explicit. Forrest stands in, synecdochically, for veterans in general, who are honourable, chivalrous and patriotic, while protestors become the violent

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[10] Kinney is referring here to the militant female peace activist who bosses the veterans about prior to the commencement of the speeches.

misogynists. That 'any of America's fine young men might have opposed the war... or that American soldiers might not have been the war's victims – all of these possibilities are excluded by the film's rewriting of history, and particularly of masculinity' (Byers 1996: 435). As the film-makers comment on the DVD: the magical element of (successful) films is 'where you don't wanna know anything other than what you're watching and you're not drawn to see anything but the story and the characters'.

Whether or not the film-makers were opposed to the war in Vietnam during the conflict, it is implicit from their comments on the DVD that they view military service in that era as the most patriotic thing to do. Forrest 'always does the right thing, as a, as a, not only as a character but as a man'; 'there was a lot of questions in and around going to Vietnam and the service and not going and fighting the war and what made you a man of that generation and Forest just kind of was able to do all the right things' (DVD commentary). The 'right thing' was to enlist in the army and fight in Vietnam. Other telling comments from the DVD include the sentiment that the South is the most patriotic segment of the US because 'it was like, those are the guys who fought in the war in Vietnam' and the notion that, when Forrest is playing ping pong during the moon landing, the TV shot of Neil Armstrong planting the stars and stripes on the moon allowed Zemeckis to 'reclaim' the flag (DVD commentary; from what it is being reclaimed is never specified, but it is likely that the reference is to the anti-war activist shown earlier in the film, whose shirt is made from an American flag.)

Although Forrest is a decorated veteran of the Vietnam War, he is an atypical veteran. The war barely affects him (except in the loss of his best friend) and he never loses his untroubled sense of masculinity. Forrest does not even 'fight' in the Vietnam War. Instead, he merely patrols the fields and the jungles and sits around on guard duty until the platoon is attacked by Vietnamese soldiers in an ambush and he rescues everyone. Forrest's tautological response to Bubba's dying question, discussed above, neatly sidesteps any critical analysis of the war. However, Vietnam is so deeply embedded as a traumatic event in the collective American psyche, and in hegemonic US discourse that film-Forrest's tautological response will not wash on its

own. Forrest's experiences in and of Vietnam do not bear enough resemblance to those other veterans. Thus the film requires a more conventionally recognisable veteran who experiences the aftermath of the war in Southeast Asia as trauma: this remasculinisation of the US is effected through the character of Lieutenant Dan.

The audience is first introduced to Lieutenant Dan when Forrest and Bubba land in Da Nang, Vietnam, and almost immediately we learn that Dan comes from a long line of military heroes, one of whom has died in 'every American War'. 'Every' US war only appears to include those in which the US state was clearly righteous and victorious: the war of independence, the civil war, WWI and WWII. Not included is any mention of the Korean War or the Spanish-American War in Cuba and the Philippine-American War. Dead American heroes thus equate with US victories and morally clear-cut causes. Although Vietnam is thus initially connected with the larger narrative of successful American military history, this tradition is severed with Dan, who, instead of dying in the ambush, is rescued by Forrest, despite articulating (several times) his wish to continue the family tradition; implicitly, then, Vietnam is coded as a defeat. Dan is a paradigmatic veteran of Vietnam, embittered and enraged at American society, God and life in general, as a result of losing his legs and apparently suffering from PTSD. Losing his legs is symbolic of losing his masculinity and virility, which he attempts to recover by sleeping with prostitutes. His character and appearance appears to be a parody of (or homage to?) Tom Cruise's rendition of Ron Kovic in *Born on the Fourth of July*. However, rather than becoming an anti-war protestor like Kovic, Dan is rehabilitated through his friendship with Forrest.

On the DVD commentary, the film-makers describe Dan as

> the metaphor, uh, for the, uh, the crippled part of America like, you know, the, the, the America that got uh, you know, blood on its hands, the Vietnam America...
>
> He has to confront the, the, you know, the fact that, you know, we were involved in this illegal war of aggression and all this, you know, stuff – he speaks for America in the scene where he says this wasn't supposed to happen...
>
> This isn't how it was supposed to ever happen...

> ...this wasn't supposed to happen and that there was a plan that's gone wrong...
>
> ...gone awry...
>
> ...yeah.

It is worth noting that this exchange reinscribes an ostensibly entirely personal sentiment – that Dan wasn't supposed to survive, or lose his legs – to function as a statement about US loss of (masculinity in) the Vietnam War more generally: it wasn't supposed to happen.

When Dan joins Forrest on the shrimping boat, he is, as before, rude and angry. One evening, Dan openly challenges God, who responds with Hurricane Carmen, a storm which wipes out the entire shrimping fleet of Bayou La Batre, with the exception of Forrest's boat, the *Jenny*, because Forrest and Dan were out at sea at the time. The town's suffering is reconfigured as an act of God, after which Forrest and Dan are able to catch record numbers of shrimp because they possess the sole remaining seaworthy fishing boat. According to Forrest, this event marks the turning-point of Dan's conversion and his 'remembering' how to be a man. Dan's reward is the re-memberment of his body through a new pair of prosthetic legs (mirroring Forrest's disability at the beginning of the film) (Byers 1996: 436). Dan does not need to be physically perfect in order to possess the qualities of the new hegemonic masculinity, because physical masculinity is no longer what 'counts' as masculine. Rather, he has learnt from Forrest how to be caring and protective, a process that began with his and Forrest's encounter with the prostitutes and culminates in Dan acquiring a young Asian fiancée. Dan's new legs are also technologically advanced, made of a titanium alloy developed by NASA. In this way the film also 'redeems the technological know-how, commonly coded both American and masculine, that failed when the military relied on it to win the war' (436).

<u>Gender: Jenny/the Domestic Sphere and Forrest/'New Man'</u>

The feminisation of those held responsible for the challenges of the 1960s and 1970s, and for implicitly undermining US strength internationally, and public support for the

war domestically, is most clearly visible in the character of Jenny, Forrest's childhood friend (and later wife), as well as with the people with whom she later associates. The 'girl next door' and Forrest's 'true love', Jenny's character contrasts starkly with that of Forrest. As a result of the implied abuse she has suffered from her father, throughout her life, the adult Jenny becomes 'just about everything the New Right means by the counterculture' (Byers 1996: 432), the opposite of Forrest in almost every way:

> Forrest, you know, he was sort of this, he represented the, the, you know, the ideal of what, you know, you know, America was supposed to be, you know, Mom, God and apple pie, right, and uh, and Jenny was the, uh, you know, the reciprocal of that, in her character, so what you have is that wonderful of unity of opposites, kind of, so you have people who are totally polarised in their culture, who are romantically attracted. (DVD commentary)

She is expelled from university after posing naked for *Playboy* (wearing just her college sweater) and travels to Memphis to work as a nude performer in a club. Some of the other 'roles' with which she is visually identified include folk-singer, bohemian, hippy, acid-dropping flower-child; antiwar activist, lover of a radical leader and involved with/supportive of the Black Panther Party; promiscuous, disco-dancing, suicidal, cocaine addict; and finally, a waitress and an HIV-positive single mother.

The images and narrative arc associated with Jenny and the domestic sphere in the film function to conflate a number of disparate countercultural behaviours and attitudes in one character:

> in this view the idea of sexual liberation or a woman's control over her desire, the "free love" sexual experimentation of bohemians and hippies, the sex industry, and AIDS are all of a piece; Playboy bunnies and anti-war activists are cut from the same cloth; and the cultures and politics of acid rock and discomania, LSD and cocaine, are utterly continuous. (Byers 1996: 432)[11]

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[11] Forrest's own experimentation with the 'counterculture' neatly encapsulates the entirety of Jimmy Carter's presidency – diegetically speaking, the only Democratic administration in the post-Vietnam era – thereby removing Forrest from this period of US 'malaise' and 'crisis of confidence' (Carter 1979d) and making him responsible for launching a series of depoliticised messages into American popular culture: 'shit happens', 'have a nice day' and the yellow smiley face. Jimmy Carter himself is 'portrayed as a wimp, in sharp contrast to Forrest, whose

This symbolic unity of disparate counter-hegemonic elements is acknowledged by Zemeckis, who argues that 'the Jenny character, I thought, you know, sort of, represented the, the unfulfilled, hole-in-the-soul part of, you know, of that American generation of, you know, not being able to find fulfilment in anything other than sex, drugs, rock and roll, whatever was going on at the time' (DVD commentary). Zemeckis's comments thus implicitly connect the anti-war movement with the (perceived) hedonism of sex, drugs and rock and roll, rather than portraying it as an important political movement with clear aims and demands. Furthermore, Jenny does not appear to play a major role in any of the political movements with which she is discursively articulated – it is her boyfriend, Wesley, who is President of the Berkeley chapter of SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) and who is connected with the Black Panthers.

Despite Jenny's experimentation with non-mainstream practices and ways of living, and her involvement, however limited, in the anti-war and civil rights movements, it is crucial to the film's narrative that Jenny is not portrayed as a feminist/'women's libber' or as being aware of feminist critiques. There is no quirky-comic scene in which she burns her bra, or in which she attends a consciousness-raising seminar to talk about the abuse she suffered as a child. Feminism must be erased from this era if the project of remasculinisation after the traumas and struggles of the 1960s and 1970s is to be successfully enacted, for it is feminist analysis that would most obviously undermine the 'feel-good' objective of the narrative (434).[12]

To a certain extent, Jenny's sexual liberation might be seen to stand in for women's liberation in other spheres of life. However, Jenny's struggle for liberation and political agency is denied by the narrative at every turn in the way in which she is shown to be unhappy because of her struggle *against* society rather than because of the limitations and oppression of that society. The film

> insistently refuse[s] to allow Jenny to claim her sexuality as grounds of liberation. Her sexual freedom is born and dies through victimization; her

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incredible endurance on his transcontinental run is reported in the same broadcast' (Byers 1996: 430).

[12] The gay rights movement is also completely eradicated from the film, to the extent that there are no gay characters, and the oblique reference to AIDS at the end of the film is also completely disassociated from its impact on gay communities in the US.

> character begins with incest and dies with AIDS, although those two words are never uttered in the film. Jenny is attacked by at least three different men in the film, but she never turns to an encounter group or a battered women's shelter. (Kinney 2003: 379)

Jenny does not form any friendships with other women in the film and although we learn from Forrest's narration that she has sisters, they are never mentioned again, either in the context of Jenny's childhood and their abusive father, or as adults. Jenny's grandmother is only shown in the brief scene when Jenny goes to live with her, and we learn nothing of Jenny's subsequent upbringing, and it is made clear that Jenny has not bonded with her college room-mate. Jenny's very presence in the film is only in relation to Forrest and to other men. The only time Jenny even speaks to another woman in the film is towards the end – and then only to discuss her son with the childminder. Even her stage name (Bobbi Dylan) and the opening line of the protest song that she sings in the Memphis strip club ('How many roads must a man walk down before you can call him a man?') code her struggle for agency in explicitly masculine terms (Kinney 2003: 380).

In order to know what is happening with Jenny throughout the years when she and Forrest are not together, 'Bob [Zemeckis] broke his own point of view rule, which was never to leave the point of view of his main character, but it was the only way he could figure out to, to keep her going throughout this movie' (DVD commentary). We are presented with 'true' images of Jenny's experiences through Forrest recounting what has been happening to her. Jenny literally only exists in this part of the film because of and through Forrest. This enacts the 'film's overt suturing of the viewer into Forrest's position, so that herstory is constantly translated into his' (Byers 1996: 434). Their marriage proves the superiority of Forrest's values and life choices over Jenny's. Towards the end of the film, in the early 1980s, just as Reagan has come to power, Jenny explicitly apologises to Forrest – 'I'm sorry for anything I ever did to you, 'cause I was messed up for a long time' – which metonymically functions as the protestors apologising to the veterans.[13] Throughout the film, the audience has been 'invited to pity but not to empathize with or fully understand her. Even her death, implicitly from AIDS, is something that happens primarily to him' (434). Her death is

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[13] See Kinney (2003: 377-8) for a comparison of Jenny's apology to Forrest with Jane Fonda's apology to the USA concerning her 1972 visit to North Vietnam.

the final punishment for her choices and lifestyle through the 1960s and 1970s and 'she is redeemed only through motherhood' (Kinney 2003: 379).

The film's erasure of feminism as a social and political movement in the 1960s and 1970s does not mean that feminism is not represented in more oblique ways. Jenny's entire 'narrative trajectory repudiates the women's movement... by preaching that the shelter of marriage is a woman's best and only hope' (Kinney 2003: 379). The narrative collapses infidelity and feminist liberation as co-equal threats to family values (Byers 1996: 433). Furthermore, the *values* threatened by the counterculture are coded as masculine, while the *bodies* which are destroyed by the counterculture are female. Forrest is even shown to be more of a feminist than Jenny, in his respect for her and her body, while she continuously places herself in risky situations and does not seem to notice others' unacceptable behaviour towards her.

Second-wave feminist critiques of traditional models of masculinity and the movement's demands for transformation are repressed in the film by being displaced onto others. Domestic violence, abandonment and child abuse are negative behaviours that are assigned to the generation of Forrest and Jenny's fathers (Byers 1996: 434): Jenny's father is implied to be the cause of her subsequent delinquent behaviour and Mrs Gump's delivery of the line 'he's on vacation' in reference to the whereabouts of Forrest's father suggests that Mr Gump has abandoned his wife and son. Forrest's baby-boomer hegemonic masculinity is portrayed in stark contrast to this older generation of absent/abusive fathers. Through his traditional achievements, football and soldiering, in combination with his roles as brother to Bubba, saviour to Dan, hospice-carer to Jenny and single parent of Forrest Junior, Forrest is shown to be a 'new man' from the very start. Forrest's masculinity has remained constant throughout the film, thus implying that the 1950s model of masculinity he began with *is* the new man of the post-Cold War era. This new man is at once a better feminist than his wife[14] and a better parent (as a stay-at-home dad) than the working single mother, is 'more feminine than and just as masculine as his

[14] At times, Forrest's perspective appears strikingly similar to radical feminist claims about patriarchy and structural violence against women, i.e., that the porn industry is a form of violence against women, and does not permit either the economic or sexual liberation of women.

father; more faithful and nurturing (and capable of same-sex friendships) than his female romantic partner; more patriotic than his own past; and just as Black as anybody' (436). Moreover,

> [t]he fact that Forrest is *naturally* this way functions in part to make the cultural history of struggle in the sixties and seventies, and particularly all calls for white men to change, superfluous: if... [the hegemonic masculine subject] was already unprejudiced, innocent and nurturing by nature, then the movements seem redundant and the "others" who participated in them suspect. (431)

Conclusion

The Deer Hunter inverted the myth of regeneration through violence, and portrayed US masculinity as in a period of crisis, being penetrated by the feminine; *Rambo II* attempted to reassert the dominance of this myth and remasculinise the US male through an insistence on the physical and mental superiority of the US soldier, but in doing so, appeared anxious, hysterical, in its efforts. *Rambo II* was also unable to show masculinity in the domestic sphere; the challenges to masculinity had to be countered in the international sphere. In contrast, *Forrest Gump* does not attempt to reassert the myth; it denies that the myth has been shaken at all. In fact, *Forrest Gump* ignores the Western myth's constitutive function in the construction of US identity entirely, in favour of focusing squarely on the events and impacts of the Cold War era. Forrest does not change throughout the film; he merely helps Dan remember who he was all along. When Forrest Junior uses the same words on the school bus as his father had used 35 years before him, 'we see at last... that *nothing has changed*... the old order is unshaken' (Byers 1996: 439, original emphasis).

Forrest Gump's project of historical reclamation, national unification and remasculinisation depends on the erasure and/or reconfiguration of the meaning of female presence, of racial and social inequity, and of the activists who challenged these. Byers notes that 'the attributes of otherness (Blackness, femininity) are assimilated to Forrest himself, while the subjects in the real position of such otherness (Bubba, Jenny) must die' (1996: 422): 'they all kind of fold into Forrest, ultimately' (DVD commentary). Once the slate has been wiped clean, 'the period can,

in effect, be retrofitted to an emergent narrative of white male regeneration' (Burgoyne 1997: 117). By aligning Forrest with the international sphere and an unchanging identity for the duration of the Cold War, the film presents a world in which the pre-Vietnam masculinity of the 1950s is identical to the kind and caring, post-Cold War 'New Man' – in effect, suturing them together as a strategy for 'containing' the challenges posed to hegemonic segments of US society during the Cold War. The trauma of Vietnam is not the problem: feminised domestic society and the challenges to white, middle-class hegemonic masculinity it raises – especially, but not only, in the international sphere of war and national security – are the real threats.

In the next chapter, I provide an intertextual reading of the presidential speeches and Vietnam War films, drawing out similarities and contrasts, both among and between the different genres of texts and across the time periods.

Chapter 7: The Gendered Intertextuality of Popular Vietnam War Films and US Presidential Speeches

The frontier is a powerful and recurring image in American political discourse. When Henry Kissinger calls himself the "Lone Ranger" of diplomacy; when Vietnam is described by combat troops as "Indian Country"... and when space exploration or plans for the Strategic Defense Initiative are tagged as the "high frontier"; the mythology of the frontier is invoked without explanation as a means of describing the situation.

(Campbell 1998: 145)

I believe the subtext here is rapidly becoming text.

(Rupert Giles, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, 1997)

Introduction

In the previous four chapters, I provided gendered readings of presidential speeches and three popular films, covering the two decades between 1975 and 1996. In this chapter, I discuss these representations as they have both remained stable and changed over time. I begin with the speeches, then move onto the films, before bringing these readings to bear on each other through intertextual analysis, in which I explore the similarities and differences between the gendered representations across the two sets of texts. As in earlier chapters, I pay particular attention to the variety of ways in which US identity, and specific groups, such as soldiers and veterans, are represented in gendered terms, as well as examining the gendered dynamics of narrative structures.

I note the overwhelming similarities in presidents' rhetorical constructions of US identity and of the Vietnam War, as well as in their calls for national renewal. I discuss the ways in which presidents' constructions of US identity are gendered masculine, against hypermasculine external enemies, such as the USSR, as well as against a feminised representation of the problems in US domestic society (in the speeches of the two post-Cold War presidents). I also examine the masculinised valorisation of Vietnam veterans. I then show how models of hegemonic masculinity have gone through three distinct iterations in the films – the traumatic destabilisation of the Western hero in *The Deer Hunter*, a hypermasculine attempt at

recuperation in *Rambo II* and, in *Forrest Gump*, the suturing of pre-Vietnam masculinity with the 'new man', as well as the ways in which enemies are hypermasculinised (in *The Deer Hunter*) and feminised (the Vietnamese, Russians and US society in *Rambo II*, domestic society in *Forrest Gump*).

I demonstrate that the films and speeches share a high degree of representational and structural congruence, particularly in their deployment of gendered binary predicates and metaphors, in their valorisation of Vietnam veterans and the feminisation of those responsible for loss of the war, as well as in their accounts of the lessons to learn from Vietnam. Subsequently, I explore the differences between the speeches and films, such as the contrasting representations of hypermasculinity and of technology in *Rambo II* and Reagan's speeches, and in broader terms, as different types of text. I conclude by arguing that a more nuanced understanding of the gendered dynamics at work in the speeches is possible – specifically, that multiple constructions of, and transformations in, masculinity are evident – when one reads these texts in conjunction with the films.

<u>Gendered Representations in US Presidential Speeches, 1975 – 1996</u>

The presidential speeches analysed here are remarkably homogeneous in their articulations and these similarities transcend party differences. An example of this cross-party continuity can be found in the fact that several presidents refer explicitly to the relationship between president and Congress. Ford's language is the most explicit in terms of highlighting the gendered dynamic of this relationship: it is not merely a 'honeymoon', but should be a 'good marriage'. The president is the (masculine) actor authorised by the Constitution, while Congress's role is one of (feminine) support. Likewise, Bush and Clinton both complain of partisan 'bickering', which brings to mind images of squabbling children or nagging housewives.

Each president, regardless of party, also calls for a new start of some kind, one which is, in fact, based on old ideals and values that are argued to come from the Founding Fathers, specifically, or from the historical development of the US state, more generally. This call for renewal is clearly identifiable as a call for remasculinisation – a

chance to forget the emasculating shame of Vietnam and other crises, and a return to a prior era of masculine innocence and confidence. That this call is repeated so frequently in the years after Vietnam is a sign that an unproblematic rekindling of an earlier, untroubled model of masculinity is not possible. The act of remasculinisation is never so straightforwardly successful or finally complete.

In terms of international politics and foreign policy, US values and characteristics are always articulated as strength – specifically, military strength, preparedness and credibility – peace and global leadership. The US is great, good, unique, and only ever (re)acts benevolently, in self-defence. The same masculine attributes used to construct the US state and nation appear again and again in all presidents' articulations: boldness, effectiveness, purpose, resolve, focus, decisiveness, conviction, determination, confidence, courage, wisdom, realism, common sense, steadfastness, stamina, self-discipline, vigour. The US is emphatically *not* weak, cowardly, passive, hesitant, irrational or sentimental. So too, the same metaphors are deployed repetitively in the speeches: the US is allied with the masculine binary signifiers of hardness (versus softness), light (over darkness), warmth (not cold), height, forward motion, progress, action and leadership (as opposed to depth, regression, passivity and following). The models of masculinity evoked by the various presidents thus appear very similar – bourgeois-rational, restrained, yet not afraid to act militarily when necessary.

In terms of the Vietnam War, each president articulates the divisive nature of Vietnam, often referring to it as a wound, or using signifiers relating to physical (ill) health and healing. The fall-out from Vietnam is seen as a loss of nerve, or will, caused by, as well as exacerbating, a lack of national unity. The need to learn the *right* lessons from Vietnam also appears in some form in all presidential speeches. The right lesson is the need to overcome this loss of credibility on the international stage, through re-memberment, re-unification, of the US body politic in support of the military. The US military and its soldiers, particularly Vietnam veterans, are owed a debt, in these representations, for having been unfairly disparaged and neglected (Carter, Reagan).

While Carter and Reagan acknowledge that some veterans still suffer, physically and/or psychologically, as a result of their service, in the rhetoric of all five presidents, the veterans of the Vietnam War are valorised for their patriotism and sacrifice. They are 'true patriots', 'gentle heroes', noble and brave, who demonstrated devotion, gallantry, loyalty, courage, dedication and valour in the service of their country (Carter, Reagan, Bush, Clinton). Veterans possess wisdom and insight as a result of their experiences, who can teach the nation about 'duty, courage, and love of country' (Carter, Bush). A chivalrous warrior masculinity is invoked here, with veterans having 'ennobled' the nation (Reagan) and demonstrated civic virtue (Clinton), and an 'extra measure' of heroism (Carter). They reflect the best in US society, the 'greatest sons and daughters any nation could ever have' (Bush), 'overwhelmingly' admired by the US public (Reagan).

On the one hand, the US nation (or rather, its civilian component) is admonished and feminised for having forgotten these heroes. This feminisation is effected through the juxtaposition of domestic and international, with the latter privileged over the former. The most important of these heroes are the former prisoners of war, and those who are still missing in action. The traditionally gendered divisions between military and civilian are preserved in these representations (recall Ford's comment that, domestically, the US had behaved as an 'indulgent parent' at home).

However, individual civilians and, by extension, the nation's citizens as a whole, are, on the other hand, remasculinised by proxy (WAUDAG 1990), in the speeches of Reagan, Bush and Clinton. This is achieved through the rhetorical association of the actions of civilian 'heroes' with those of military personnel. Individual heroes may be male or female, but their exploits, and the way in which they are valorised, are clearly masculine. This is in contrast to representations of women as a group, who are portrayed as passive and victimised, in need of 'solicitous care' and assistance. This is one example of the subtle transformations evident in the corpus of speeches over time.

The shifts in the presidential rhetoric of this twenty-year period can be grouped loosely by decade: the mid- to late 1970s (Carter and, to a lesser extent, Ford), the

1980s (Reagan and the early part of Bush's administration) and the early 1990s (Bush and Clinton). While such periodisation was, in part, expected, it is interesting that the first and last of these periods again blur party boundaries (in both cases, a Republican is followed by a Democratic president). Before turning to these, however, it is worth briefly highlighting those differences in articulation that do not fit comfortably into the 'transformation by decade' paradigm.

The first has already been alluded to above: the valorisation of civilian heroes through association with soldiers and veterans, a rhetorical strategy begun by Reagan and continued by Bush and Clinton. Another is the similarity between Carter and Reagan's characterisations of the USSR as an aggressive and brutal enemy that displays the desire for colonial domination and respects only military strength. The USSR is hypermasculinised against the bourgeois-rational model, described above, that is ascribed to the US. That neither Bush nor Clinton represent the USSR in this way is most likely due to the end of the Cold War and the ensuing dissolution of the bipolar system that dominated prior administrations' focus.

Finally, Carter and Clinton are the only two presidents to directly address the state of Vietnam in the speeches analysed here, and they do so very differently: Carter represents the country as acting with 'inhumanity and cruelty',[1] while Clinton (during whose incumbency diplomatic relations with Vietnam were restored) articulates the Vietnamese government as a responsible international actor that is assisting the US in locating the remains of soldiers missing in action.

The self-representations Carter creates are not identical to representations of the US state. Nonetheless, as a figurehead for the nation, Carter's depiction of his own identity impacts upon his attempts to define the country, its citizens and its foreign policy. Of himself, he used phrases such as 'fumbling attempts', 'my weakness' and 'my mistakes'. In terms of the country, he argued that the US had been 'chastened', admitted that his administration had 'failed the American people' and acknowledged that there had been 'recent mistakes' and governmental sources of 'weakness and

[1] Carter even went so far as to argue that the US would not pay the reparations to Vietnam (which had been agreed by the Nixon Administration as part of the peace negotiations in Paris in the early 1970s) on the grounds that 'the destruction was mutual' (Carter 1977b).

error'. These articulations do not build up a picture of a strong and confident masculinity, for Carter personally or the nation as a whole.

Furthermore, through his rhetoric, Carter signals that the Vietnam War was not an 'honourable' war, particularly in terms of the inequalities of the draft system, that the US had not remembered the events of that time 'honestly, realistically, with humility', that the country had lost its 'moral course', and that it had violated its own 'rules and standards' in that conflict. As Mary Stuckey suggests, 'what neither Ford nor Carter could convey was the one thing Americans needed in addition to a restoration of honesty—a sense of control. ... They both sustained images as honest, decent men. ... There was some feeling that perhaps such men were not brutal enough to lead a world power like the United States' (1991: 112).

Where Ford and Carter stay away from direct articulations of the Vietnam War almost entirely in their State of the Union addresses, choosing most of the time to acknowledge the divisiveness of the War only obliquely, both Reagan and Bush represent the Vietnam War as a noble and just cause, both directly and by rhetorically articulating the war into a string of other, more legitimate conflicts – WWI, WWII and Korea.[2] At the end of the Cold War, Bush also describes Vietnam veterans as not just heroes but also 'victors'. Clinton does not attempt to justify the Vietnam War as overtly as do Reagan and Bush, but he does indirectly imply that the US achieved some sort of success in that conflict (US soldiers 'fought for the freedom and the independence of the Vietnamese people, Today the Vietnamese are independent').

Carter, Reagan, Bush and Clinton all call for the 'fullest possible accounting' of US soldiers missing in action in Indochina, but Reagan is unique in his claim that, of some 2500 soldiers missing, 'some may still be serving' as prisoners of war. Clinton, on the other hand, goes further than any other president in acknowledging the specific failings of the US government towards Vietnam veterans, in his admission of the negative effects of the use of Agent Orange during the war. However, he refers to

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[2] Carter in fact pursued the opposite strategy, glossing over Indochina altogether, in his list of US achievements in the Cold War, in which he referred to Korea, the Middle East, Berlin, Cuba and the nuclear arms race.

this harm as 'unintended' and distinguishes between the US state/previous presidential administrations and his own administration, which is working on the side of the veterans.

Reagan is unique among the five presidents in his focus on technological innovation and particularly his articulation of scientific progress with the trope of the frontier and the US's 'pioneer spirit'. This challenge is the opportunity for a 'second American Revolution... pushing back frontiers of knowledge'. Reagan singles out the privatisation of space exploration as built on the masculine attributes of enterprise, daring and competitiveness. Technological development is 'pioneered and... led' by the US. The masculine identity ascribed to the US in this formulation invokes images of both civilisation and physical toughness, in opposition to, and control of, the 'raw, untamed wilderness' of the North American landscape (and implicitly, the Native American population) that US immigrants encountered in previous centuries.

The USSR does not feature as an enemy in the post-Cold War speeches of George Bush and Bill Clinton, for whom domestic society is, instead, a focus. Bush calls for a 'kinder' nation, based on mercy and 'goodness'. Threats to and problems in domestic society that need to be tackled include drugs, homelessness, disability, violent crime, AIDS, racial discrimination/civil rights and hate crimes. Clinton echoes some of these issues, and also highlights domestic violence, teen pregnancy, children being born outside of wedlock, and absentee fathers. Civic responsibility – and, above all, responsible parenting – are key themes for both presidents. In some ways, the models of citizen, society and community articulated by both Bush and Clinton resonate with a pre-Vietnam-era understanding of straightforward gendered binaries masculinity, in that the citizen is clearly male and masculine, workers who are also head of the family and the household, while women are confined to the home, or are presented as passive and/or requiring extra care (e.g., poor and young mothers) (WAUDAG 1990).

Clinton calls for community empowerment, and for government to re-empower religious, charitable and civic associations, creating AmeriCorps, a domestic version

of President John Kennedy's Peace Corps.[3] US society is represented as having declined since the 1960s, when these threats first appeared – threats such as cocaine, which is a 'deadly bacteria' that has 'hurt the body... [and] soul of our country'. In articulating the desire for a return to a World War II or early Cold War hegemonic model of citizen and society, the challenges to those models – civil rights, women's liberation, gay rights – that arose in the 1960s and 1970s are lumped together with drugs and AIDS as problems all of a type. However, at the same time, the ideal 1990s citizen, while masculine, is also more caring and tender – a more involved parent, who helps his children with their homework – the 'new man' model of masculinity, which has appropriated some feminine characteristics.

Having discussed the continuities and transformations in presidential rhetoric, I now turn to the films, drawing out the features that link these three texts, and the ways in which the gendered nature of these representations changed over the two decades that span the films' release.

Gendered Representations in *The Deer Hunter*, *Rambo II* and *Forrest Gump*

Perhaps the most obvious similarity amongst the films analysed is the portrayal of the war at the level of the veteran's experience.[4] While this may seem 'natural', it is striking that none of the films attempts to take a broader view of the war – in the way that, say, *The Longest Day* or *A Bridge Too Far* do for events in World War II – or to depict the government decisions that affect the soldiers on the front line. Indeed, none of the three films represent the war centrally from the platoon level (the most common form that the WWII combat film, and many Vietnam War films, take; see Slotkin 2001; Jeffords 1989). Other veterans are depicted (Nick and Steven, the POWs, Bubba and Lieutenant Dan) but in each film, the veteran – Michael, Rambo, Forrest – is the character on which the narrative focuses almost exclusively. In each

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[3] This call for a re-empowerment of civil society organisations resonates with Robert Putnam's (1995, 2000) arguments concerning the decline of social capital in the US from the early Cold War period.

[4] This is a feature of many other Vietnam War films, including *84 Charlie MoPic* (1989), *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989), *Casualties of War* (1989), *Coming Home* (1978), *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), *Good Morning Vietnam* (1987), *Hamburger Hill* (1987), *Platoon* (1986) and *We Were Soldiers* (2002).

case, the veteran is portrayed sympathetically, and as the emblem of hegemonic masculinity of that era.

While all three protagonists are chaste, almost completely celibate, and excellent soldiers, beyond these features, there are three distinct models of hegemonic masculinity in the three films. Michael is quiet, stoic, disciplined and in control, chivalrous although uncomfortable in social settings, and much more at home in the wilderness, a natural hunter. As a soldier – a Ranger – he wears a bandana and his face is streaked with war paint. Many of these attributes are those of the classic figure of the Native American, but also appropriate elements of the successful tactics deployed by the NLF/VC during the Vietnam War.

Rambo's ancestry imbues him, too, with elements of the noble savage, and his combat methods are also those of the NLF/VC. However, while Rambo shares all of the above-listed traits with Michael, his part-German heritage codes him as Aryan *Übermensch* and his rippling muscles are much more overtly an emblem of physical strength and brute force. Further, where the final scene of *The Deer Hunter* shows Michael integrating into the Clairton community, Rambo is still very much alone and separate from domestic society: the final scene of *Rambo II* depicts him walking into the sunset.

Forrest, on the other hand, while equally comfortable in his role as a soldier, is not coded with Native American attributes. His warrior masculinity is also one of discipline, but one that is based on subservience to the military's institutional hierarchy. Of the three heroes, Forrest is the most successful veteran, in terms of the post-conflict roles he plays in his community, both nationally (representing the US at table tennis) and locally in Bayou Le Batre and Greenbow, as citizen, businessman and philanthropist.

However, as was demonstrated in the previous chapters, merely discussing the models of masculinity of the three main characters – or, indeed, describing the diverse masculine and/or feminine characteristics of the multiple minor characters – does not result in a particularly sophisticated gender analysis. The complexity of the

gendered dynamics at work in the films can only be captured by exploring the narrative function and the visual imagery offered, as well as the interplay of these two dimensions.

In many ways, *The Deer Hunter* and *Rambo II* share more in common with each other than with *Forrest Gump*. Both *The Deer Hunter* and *Rambo II* deploy the conventions of the Western genre – in particular, the captivity narrative – to frame the filmic narratives, both of which focus on US POWs, and both Michael and Rambo make the flight from civilisation and community into the violence of the wilderness. However, their journeys, and the films' narrative resolutions, are very different.

In *The Deer Hunter*, the American myth of regeneration through violence is apparently undermined when Michael comes into contact with 'Vietnam as a frontier landscape so hostile that America, having come as the hunter with dreams of omnipotence, is held captive in it' (Hellmann 1982: 426). US innocence has been destroyed by the encounter in (with) Vietnam, in which its own violence was turned back upon itself, and US society has been forever changed.

As (a) representative of US society, Michael must come to terms with how to continue 'once [that society] has experienced the inversion of its central assumptions about itself' (426). Michael is unable to shoot the deer during the second hunt, supposedly representing the hero's rejection of violence as regenerative. Thus, the final scene seems to portray the Western hero as accepting this loss and taking his place within the community he had previously eschewed (429). This ending would appear to represent an undermining of the hegemony of the (masculine) American myth.

However, the critical implications of the supposed inversion of the US myth are undermined by the ways in which gender and race are deployed in support of this move. For example, although the film is about masculine bonding, it is clear that one particular form of masculinity (Michael's) is valorised. Other, subordinate forms of masculinity are shown as unable to deal with their experiences in Vietnam and are punished by/in the narrative. Steven, who displays feminine symptoms of hysteria, is

permanently paralysed. Nick, who is feminised in his love of the mountains and natural beauty, rather than the male sport of hunting, goes insane and ultimately commits suicide, his death representing the need to eradicate gender(ed) ambiguity (thus disavowing a critical/queer reading of Michael and Nick's relationship as a homosexual love story) and reinforce existing rigid gendered dichotomies.

The film devotes roughly equal diegetic space to the domestic (feminine) and the international (masculine) realms. Nevertheless, the feminine is subordinated to the masculine, in terms of the portrayal of the characters within these spaces, and in the relationship between the two realms, particularly the interplay of narrative and spectacle. The women who occupy the feminine/feminised space of domestic society in Clairton are shown to be overbearing (Steven's mother) or treacherous (Angela's infidelity and Linda's oscillation between Nick and Michael).

Furthermore, of the two promises around which the film is structured – Steven's marriage to Angela and Michael's promise to Nick not to leave him in Vietnam –the former is clearly subordinated to the latter. Finally, in terms of the relationship between narrative and spectacle, all of the movement and dynamism of the film, the narrative progression, is contained within the international/masculine sphere (Callenbach 1979: 20; Jeffords 1989: 96-9). Women are restricted to the domestic (and, even then, are excluded from the masculine spaces – the steel mill, the hunt, the bar – within this realm) and do not represent a 'significant force' in the film (Callenbach 1979: 21).

The final scene, in which the women are invited into the previously masculine space of the bar, is ambiguous in terms of its effect on the narrative. The integration of the feminine is a potentially critical dynamic: it is a powerful visual symbol but one that provides no clear resolution to the film. However, this scene must be read in filmic context with (a) the demonisation of the Vietnamese as barbarian savages; (b) the fact that the Vietnamese refugees are shown briefly, *en masse* and from a distance (while the suffering of the three US soldiers is visceral, highly personalised and explored in depth); and (c) the possibility that Michael's rejection of violence is only

temporary (given that, during the second hunt and subsequently, he displays symptoms of PTSD).

When read in such a context, it is not clear that the US has been forced to confront 'the full implications' of its experience in Vietnam, nor that its response to the loss of innocence and emasculation effected by its defeat is to reject the US national myth. Instead, this integration can be read as the *co-option* of the still-subordinated feminine into a national project of remasculinisation that, after a brief hiatus, could attempt to re-invigorate this myth – exactly what is attempted in *Rambo II*. As Franklin argues, *The Deer Hunter* reworks the Vietnam War as damaging to the US soldier and helps ' to canonize US prisoners of war' as the 'quintessential symbols of betrayed American manhood' (2000: 15, 193). This theme is crucial to *Rambo II*, which takes the victimisation of the Vietnam veteran, and in particular, the figure of the POW, as its focus.

In *First Blood*, Rambo appropriates the fighting style, tactics and iconography of the NLF, the implication being that US troops were every bit capable of defeating the Vietnamese. He is portrayed very sympathetically and his chivalrous warrior masculinity is shown to be superior to the domesticated, petty bourgeois law enforcement officers. Rambo bests not only the police but also the 'weekend warriors' of the National Guard. In the final scenes, Rambo rails against the anti-war protestors and the neglect he and other soldiers suffered upon their return to the US. He contrasts the 'code of honor' the soldiers had in Vietnam with his experience of civilian life and indicts US society for its mistreatment of veterans (recall the beginning of the film, in which the issue of Agent Orange is highlighted) and for loss of the war ('somebody wouldn't let us win'). Rambo is 'broken' but still a Medal of Honor-winning hero 'whose final weeping symbolises the United States' unconscious guilt' (Walsh 1988: 59).

In the sequel, Rambo is offered the chance to overcome this victimisation by undertaking a dangerous mission to identify the location of several POWs still held in northern Vietnam. The contrast between Rambo – a superhero, displaying symbols of both the 'white man gone native' and the counter-culture (bandana, long hair) – and

Murdock, who represents the CIA (and, by extension, the US government, and civilian society in general) could not be starker. Murdock is uncomfortable in the Thai heat and humidity, while Rambo displays a silent control, nowhere more at ease than in the jungle, despite losing his equipment in the parachute jump over Vietnam. Using primitive weaponry (knife, bow and arrows), he dominates the physical landscape, using mud, water and fire, becoming literally a force of nature.

The Western generic convention that *The Deer Hunter* undermined, in demonstrating the pointlessness of the revenge quest, is revived in *Rambo II*, through the simple 'good versus evil' narrative the film establishes, deploying tropes from 'the last good war' (WWII), visually coding the Vietnamese as Japanese, and the Russians as Nazi Germans. As Studlar and Desser (1988: 12) argue, that the Vietnamese are presented as so cruel as to still be holding US soldiers prisoner after the end of the war demonstrates the US's righteousness in fighting the war in the first place. It absolves veterans/the US of responsibility for the war's destructive consequences. Questions about the conflict's morality are displaced and reworked into questions about the US's obligations to its veterans (11).

Moreover, *Rambo II*'s response to *The Deer Hunter*'s inversion of the US myth is to 'do whatever it takes' to 'win this time', in the face of both Vietnamese brutality and domestic treachery. *Contra* Michael, not only does Rambo deploy overwhelming force to ensure that the violence of 'the Other' does not defeat him, (he is regenerated through violence) he also demonstrates that 'the Other' did not defeat the US to begin with – rather, the US. By the end of the film, Rambo has 'restored the Vietnam War veteran to the status of American mythological frontier hero' (Sutton and Winn 2001: 29) that *The Deer Hunter* called into question.

All of Rambo's enemies are coded as feminised by the narrative and visual imagery, but they are also ordered into a hierarchy. At the bottom of this hierarchy are the Vietnamese. Rambo exacts vengeance upon them for their cruel treatment of the US POWs. After this, he defeats the team of crack USSR commandoes, culminating in a helicopter 'duel' with Podovsky, his Russian counterpart. At the top of the hierarchy is the US government, in the bourgeois-rational figure of the Murdock, the CIA agent

(bureaucrat). While Rambo is angry with Murdock, however, he does not kill him, demonstrating that Rambo is now not only invincible on the battlefield, but is also no longer broken psychologically, and that he has retained his military code of honour in the face of the US government's treachery.

In addition to his coding as *Übermensch*, Rambo is coded in religious terms, as a Christ-like Messiah, among other tropes. The loincloth he wears and the torture he suffers while bound in a crucified position draw on the iconography of Jesus, and Rambo is the true saviour of the POWs. The sado-masochistic spectacle of Rambo's suffering is 'just punishment for the guilt of the loss of masculinity and US imperial power in Vietnam' (Warner in Kellner 1995: 68) while his purges them of this guilt and redeems them in a hypermasculine display of physical strength and violence.

However, while audiences may temporarily be able to identify vicariously with Rambo, his hypermasculinity is unattainable for most men (Rambo is thus also a source of inadequacy for the spectator) and the display appears as somewhat of an hysterical overreaction to the trauma of Vietnam. Rambo is a loner ('Lone Wolf') and the film does not address any of the issues facing 'actual' men in US society – male bonding, work, or family – themes that *The Deer Hunter* touched on, and that *Forrest Gump* puts centre-stage. *The Deer Hunter* and *Forrest Gump* spend a large proportion of the diegesis exploring US domestic society as the counterpart to the conflict in Vietnam, while *Rambo II* focuses exclusively on the international sphere.

Although *Forrest Gump* rejects the Western as the model for exploring the Vietnam War, as a romance, it nonetheless relies on conventionally gendered myths, imagery and narrative structures.[5] In chapter 6 I outlined all of the features that make Forrest an unexpected American 'everyman',[6] embodying a hegemonic ideal of masculinity: college athlete, decorated warrior, statesman, businessman, philanthropist and father. Against this valorisation of the masculine, the public and the international

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[5] As noted in chapter 4, Westerns are a sub-set of the romance genre.

[6] The one time that Forrest would not be able to stand in for every man is in his views about the Vietnam War, which are handily silenced, thus preventing the Vietnam War from becoming a divisive issue in the film. The film-makers acknowledge this to be the case on the DVD commentary.

sphere, Jenny is associated with the feminine domestic sphere, in the form of those social movements that challenged hegemonic white masculinity in the 1960s and 1970s (except women's liberation): the anti-war movement, the Black Panthers, SDS; she is also associated with the hippy counter-culture, pornography, drugs and disco.

Later in the film, while she is partially redeemed through her association with the other type of domestic society (as a wife and mother), she is also punished through her death from AIDS. As for the film's racial dynamics, at every stage, Forrest is shown as usurping African-American agency, including the desegregation of the University of Alabama, uncovering the Watergate scandal and replacing Bubba as the shrimping boat captain in their planned venture, and providing for Bubba's family. Forrest is a 'better' white man than Wesley, Jenny's boyfriend; he is a better black man than Bubba or the Black Panther; and a better feminist than Jenny.

Director Robert Zemeckis points out that a character usually undergoes a narrative arc. However, Forrest remains constant throughout the film; the characters that change the most are Jenny and Lieutenant Dan, the archetypal wounded and traumatised Vietnam veteran. In his unchanging identity, Forrest rehabilitates aspects of a pre-Vietnam masculinity, while those negative aspects that cannot be recuperated are attributed to civilian men or racial others, or are ascribed to an earlier generation of white men (Forrest and Jenny's fathers). In his concern for Jenny suffering domestic violence, and his tender care of his son, Forrest also displays the classic signs of the post-Cold War 'new man'. He also functions as a catalyst for Dan's re-memberment and remasculinisation. Dan is articulated into a chain of ancestors that fought in older US conflicts and, although he is mistreated by society, Forrest restores his sense of pride and Dan is rewarded with a new set of titanium-alloy prosthetic legs and an Asian-American wife.

All three films deal with the impact of the war on returning veterans, both at the level of individual psychology and in a socio-political context. Each contains depictions of veterans suffering from symptoms of PTSD, and veterans that have been victimised in some way – at the hands of the Vietnamese in *The Deer Hunter*, by the US government in *Rambo II* and by domestic society in *Forrest Gump*. All three

films valorise the Vietnam veteran as the hegemonic masculine ideal. Although each hero in involved in some kind of heterosexual romantic relationship (Michael with Linda, Rambo with Co, Forrest with Jenny, Dan with Susan), none of these is a typical relationship. Women in these films are either treacherous or otherwise unimportant. The Vietnamese go from cruel hypermasculine barbarians (*The Deer Hunter*) to effeminate men (*Rambo II*) to finally being evacuated from narratives of the conflict entirely (*Forrest Gump*).

The history of the Vietnam conflict, and nuanced political discussion of people's opposition to the war, is also absent in the films. What *The Deer Hunter* calls into question about masculinity and the emasculation of the US, *Rambo II* aims to answer with hypermasculine force, but appears as an hysterical over-reaction, and which deals only with remasculinisation in the international sphere/military arena, and which thus fails to function as the final word in a comprehensive project of remasculinisation. *Forrest Gump* uses a different strategy, rejecting the Western myth in favour of a more conventional love story, and creates a protagonist that is equally hegemonic in the international and domestic spheres. Forrest's masculinity rehabilitates elements of a pre-Vietnam, immediate post-World-War-II era masculinity, thereby effecting (or attempting to effect) a Cold War 'containment' of Vietnam as an anomalous period in US history.

Having shown how gendered narratives and representations of US identity in the wake of Vietnam have remained stable and changed over time in the speeches and in the films, I now discuss their intertextual constitution.

<u>Reading the Speeches and Films Intertextually</u>

While the similarities across the five presidents' articulations may be accounted for, at least in part, by a national demand for bi-partisan consensus in foreign affairs, this in turn begs the question, upon which (unspoken) assumptions and beliefs is this consensus built? I argue that gender plays a crucial role as 'what goes without saying' in the construction of this consensus, while the 'taken-for-granted-ness' of common assumptions about gender also allow superficial differences to be accentuated

between Republican and Democratic Party positions. This is also true of the similarities across the speeches and films. Gender is (one of) the logic(s) by which they are intertextual, and it is also gender's 'taken for granted-ness' that obscures the intertextual links between presidential and filmic discourses, thus reinforcing the durability of these representations. Reading the speeches through the films - putting the texts into conversation with each other – allows the representations of gender to become more visible in each and to see the ways in which they reinforce each other.

While the speeches invest heavily in constructions of the US state as a whole, the films do not concentrate on high politics or US foreign policy in a national sense, but remain tied to the level of individual veterans' experiences. (The one isolated instance of a reference to US governmental institutions is in *Rambo II*, when Murdock explicitly mentions Congress as the reason why more is not being done to rescue the POWs, thereby implicating this institution in the feminisation of those responsible for loss of the war.) However, despite this ostensible difference, all of the texts analysed – both speeches and films – rely heavily on many of the same gendered binaries. While it is the US state and nation being described in the speeches, and individual men in the films, the binaries of masculine and feminine are deployed with similar discursive effects – using hypermasculinity to marginalise a racial or national other (depictions of the Vietnamese in *The Deer Hunter*, and of the USSR in Carter and Reagan's speeches), and feminising domestic society (*Rambo II*, *Forrest Gump*, Bush, Clinton).

The speeches of all five presidents highlight the trauma that Vietnam effected on the US body politic using the metaphor of physical and psychological damage, representations echoed in the three characters in *The Deer Hunter*, and in the figures of Rambo and Lieutenant Dan. All of the texts valorise Vietnam veterans and privilege their experiences as the 'truth' about the Vietnam War, using this valorisation of veterans to remasculinise the US by proxy. However, the films reveal that different veteran masculinities are valorised in different eras –in Michael, Rambo, Forrest and Dan – thus complexifying the readings of the speeches.

Carter's humility, his implicit questioning of the morality of US foreign policy, and the suggestion of weakness that he introduced to his self-constructions and thus those of US identity, resonate with the portrayal of Vietnam as destabilising the US's conception of self-identity in *The Deer Hunter* – a myth that was disturbed but not destroyed, however. After Carter, this myth is reworked by Reagan and in *Rambo II*, both of which offer the same account for the defeat in Vietnam: the war was a noble cause in which US soldiers were prevented from victory because they were not allowed to go all out to win.

The articulatory strategies deployed by both Reagan and Bush, tying Vietnam into a string of wars that are perceived as legitimate in the eyes of the US public, are also found in *Rambo II* and *Forrest Gump*. *Rambo II* effects this through the visual coding of the Vietnamese as WWII-era Japanese soldiers, and to depict the Russians as blond-haired blue-eyed Nazis. *Forrest Gump* is even more explicit: when we first meet Lieutenant Dan, we are shown a series of his ancestors dying in battles in the American Revolutionary War, the American Civil War and both World Wars. This is perhaps the most explicit and interesting examples of intertextuality found between the speeches and films. The effect is even more dramatic and powerful in Forrest Gump than in the speeches because of the deployment of visual imagery in support of the articulation.

In terms of representations of the Vietnamese, Carter, Reagan, *The Deer Hunter* and *Rambo II* all portray them as cruel, although very little can be gleaned from the speeches. These representations are given much more depth in the films, in which the Vietnamese go from being hypermasculine barbarians to effeminate Orientals. It is possible that without the films' very clear visual and narrative constructions of the Vietnamese, the arguments presented by presidents in speeches may well not have carried as much rhetorical persuasiveness.

The similarities between the discursive representations of US domestic society offered by Bush and Clinton are shared by *Forrest Gump*. Both Bush and Clinton articulate a number of problematic trends, many of which are personified in the character of Jenny: drugs, single-parenting, AIDS. In contrast, all of the solutions that

Bush and Clinton recommend are embodied in Forrest: patriotic military service and civilian heroism, philanthropy and involved fathering. Bush advocates equal opportunities for disabled people and Clinton argues strongly for all children to be given equal opportunities: 'In Clinton's view, we cannot know the future of those children, specify a single vision, or determine absolute results. But if we learn to learn, develop the skills, and take the first step, all will eventually be well' (Murphy 2002: 241) – exactly what happens (literally) in the film, once Forrest starts running as a child.

Carter, Reagan and Bush, *The Deer Hunter* and *Rambo II* all highlight the POW/MIA issue, but this theme is not present in *Forrest Gump* and is dealt with differently by Clinton, whose construction of the Vietnamese state is one of cooperation with the US to locate MIAs. The end of the Cold War and the shift to a more internal focus to locate the threats to US identity in Bush and Clinton's speeches also resonates with the disappearance of (either barbaric or effeminate) Vietnamese from *Forrest Gump*. The threats in this film are anti-war protestors, Black Panthers and drug-takers who spread AIDS.

In terms of divergences, the representations of the USSR as enemies in Reagan's speeches correlates to a certain extent with those in *Rambo II*, although they are gendered very differently: Reagan hypermasculinises the Soviet state as aggressive, while in the film, Rambo is a hypermasculine ideal against a feminised Russian enemy. Further, *Rambo II* is the only text which explicitly rejects a bourgeois, middle-class model of US masculinity. The characters in *The Deer Hunter* are working-class, and the shift in characteristics of hegemonic masculinity in *Forrest Gump* are not identical to those of the 1970s, in that Forrest is shown to be a 'new man'. However, some of the characteristics of that earlier period remain, and there are simply no middle-class characters depicted in *The Deer Hunter*, while *Rambo II* sets up an overt confrontation between Rambo and Murdock, in which Murdock is defeated.

Of the presidents, only Reagan relies explicitly on the trope of the frontier as a representational device, and he does so specifically with reference to the new frontier of scientific and technological development. Given that two of the films are

structured as part of the Western genre, it is perhaps surprising that this national myth is not echoed more clearly in the presidential speeches. There are a number of possible explanations for this. First, the Western is a genre associated with film, and may be less commonly deployed in political rhetoric in general. Second, all of the presidents refer back to the founding of the US state in their calls for national renewal, which may invoke, albeit much less explicitly, the same 'pioneer spirit'. Third, the ways in which Reagan articulates the concept of the hero resonate with the model of heroism displayed by Rambo.

However, the starkest divergence between the speeches and films is also connected with Reagan's deployment of the concept of the frontier to promote scientific progress as a valorised component of US identity. In direct contrast, in *Rambo II*, the valorised model of masculinity is based on superhuman physical strength and mastery over the natural terrain. Rambo rejects technology, choosing primitive weapons and destroying the CIA computer banks at the end of the film. It is interesting, given the common association of Reagan with a 'Rambo-esque' foreign policy, that the clearest differences between the speeches and the films occur between the Republican president and Stallone's film.

Conclusion

All of the presidents also highlight the need to learn the 'right' lessons from Vietnam, which becomes increasingly explicitly connected with the suffering of veterans at the hands of US government and domestic society, over the twenty-year period. Similarly, that the war has caused disagreements and disunity within US society is readily acknowledged, but none of the texts analysed offer any historical contextualisation of the conflict or any discussion of its causes, or its consequences for the Vietnamese. *Rambo II* and Clinton both acknowledge the effects of Agent Orange on US veterans, but neither discusses its damaging legacy for the Indochinese people and landscape. That the valorisation of the Vietnam veteran and the concomitant attempts at remasculinisation of US identity (albeit through different rhetorical articulations and visual constructions), and the absence of critical reflection about why the US involved itself in the conflict, or about its military

strategies in that arena, are the over-arching similarities between these texts, is worth noting, since it was by no means inevitable that these silences and omissions would be found in all of the texts.

The degree of gendered similarities between the films and the speeches are remarkable, given that these texts were not chosen for their intertextuality. The act of 'reading together' these seemingly discrete discourses provides us with a richer and more nuanced understanding of how the construction of identity, foreign policy and world politics occurs than does the analysis of either policy articulations or popular culture in isolation. If the speeches are examined in isolation, the gendered dynamics of some of these constructions and presuppositions are obscured. It is with the juxtaposition of the filmic analyses that the nuances, multiple masculinities and the transformations in these constructions, become more apparent. The films provide visual imaginaries and personalised re-presentations of hitherto abstract concepts, which makes them powerful vehicles for creating the extant cultural resources upon which presidents and other political figures can implicitly draw. However, in so doing, films also open up avenues of critique that may otherwise remain indiscernible when analysing political rhetoric in isolation from the popular cultural contexts in which it was delivered.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

Yeah, I know where Vietnam is. It's on TV. ... Southeast Asia? What, it's there too?

(Muhammad Ali, *Ali*, 2001)

Motion pictures are potentially the most influential form of communication ever invented.

(J. Edgar Hoover, *Chaplin*, 1992)

Summary of Findings and Original Contribution

In chapter 1, I articulated the objectives of the research: to analyse the gendered logics of representation in (1) US presidential speeches and (2) popular Vietnam War films; to examine (3) the continuities and transformations in these discursive contexts over time, and (4) the intertextual similarities and differences between these two contexts; and (5) to establish the importance and validity of studying popular cultural texts within the discipline of IR. The original contributions of this research are threefold and are discussed in turn below.

First, in terms of the empirical analysis (the first three research objectives), in chapter 3, I examined constructions of the Vietnam War, of US identity and of the US military, soldiers and veterans (particularly Vietnam veterans) as they appeared in the speeches of the five presidents. I found that all presidents deployed similar representations of the Vietnam War as a traumatic wound, through metaphors of bodily strength/illness, and as a divisive issue in US society and foreign policy. All of the presidents called for a renewal of US society based on old values, and for national unity in a post-Vietnam era. They also articulated the relationship between Congress and the Presidency as a feminine/masculine dichotomy, and the same attributes and binary metaphors were deployed again and again to construct the US as bourgeois-rational masculine (against an aggressive and hyper-masculine USSR or feminised threats in domestic society).

All presidents valorised Vietnam veterans as heroes, and as having suffered twice – first in the war and then upon their return. While domestic society is feminised and

blamed for this, veterans are presented as chivalrous warriors, and civilian heroes are masculinised by proxy through the rhetorical articulation of their actions with those of US military personnel. Four of the five presidents also highlight the continuing issue of POW/MIAs and the US government's attempts to locate these. In terms of differences between the presidents, and transformations in the representations articulated in the speeches, the most notable of these are Carter's humility and his emphasis of his own weaknesses, as well as of US failings; Reagan's enthusiastic promotion of technology and scientific development through the trope of the frontier and the US's 'pioneer spirit'; and Bush and Clinton's focus on a kinder nation, one that prioritises civic responsibility and parenting. This model of citizen sutures together older, pre-Vietnam elements of masculinity with tenderness and caring, in the form of a post-Cold War 'new man' masculinity.

In chapter 4, I conducted three readings of *The Deer Hunter*, examining, first, the focus on male bonding in the film; second, the deployment of the generic conventions of the Western; and finally, the gendered implications of these conventions for the meaning conveyed by the narrative. I argued that, although the film contains some critical elements, ultimately, the ways in which the feminine is incorporated and co-opted into a project of renewed US nationalism and remasculinisation undermine these critical dynamics. In chapter 5, I highlighted the differences between the novel and film of *First Blood*, before discussing the hypermasculine characteristics of John Rambo; the sado-masochistic dimensions of *Rambo II*'s narrative structure and visual elements; and the ways in which other male and female characters – notably, Co and Murdock – are portrayed, and the ways in which the US government and society are feminised as responsible for the loss of the war. In chapter 6, I analysed the articulations in *Forrest Gump*, the only film of the three which is not structured around the Western genre. I explored the suturing of an early Cold War model of masculinity with the 'new man' in the character of Forrest's. I also discussed the dynamics of race and gender as these play out in the film's narrative, particularly through Bubba and Jenny and representations of the Vietnam veteran through Lieutenant Dan. I demonstrated how the feminine is again represented as responsible for loss of the war, and for the social upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s that threatened US masculinity.

Second, in terms of the research design, I deliberately targeted hegemonic texts, in order to examine whether and how these texts are intertextually constituted. I have demonstrated that the intertextuality of representations across official presidential and popular cultural discourses is present even in texts not specifically selected for their status as good examples of intertextuality. The high level of representational congruence between these discursive constructions was certainly not inevitable. The similarities can be identified at the micro-/conceptual level – in the ways in which binary predicates are deployed, or how Reagan, Bush, *Rambo II* and *Forrest Gump* all articulate Vietnam into a chain of more legitimate conflicts, for example – and at the macro-/discursive level, in the ways in which those agents and institutions deemed responsible for the loss of the war are feminised, and in the valorisation of veterans as the unfair victims of mistreatment by US domestic society.

Third, I have demonstrated the validity – indeed, the necessity – of conducting popular cultural research in IR, and of doing so through a poststructural approach, which pays careful attention to the nuances of relationships beyond policy documents and the statements of political actors in the narrow definition of this term. The findings clearly substantiate the claim that popular culture is central to, and must therefore be analysed under the rubric of, IR. The overwhelming similarities identified between the films and the speeches, and the ways in which these track each other over time, regardless of any 'causal' linkages, demonstrates that focusing on elite and official constructions not only doesn't tell the whole story about the gendered content of discursive articulations, but also misses the ways in which these constructions gain legitimacy and popularity amongst the public at large. Examining popular culture only for its national and global economic dynamics, or decrying it for its supposed 'inaccuracies' of representation, ignores the importance of its myriad influences on our daily lives, and the beliefs we create, maintain and transform about the worlds in which we live.

Limitations of the Data Set: Possible Directions for Future Research

In concluding her analysis of inaugural and State of the Union addresses from 1885-2000, Vanessa Beasley (2004: 158) calls for comparative analytical work on mass

media, television and other forms of popular culture, to look for ideals of US citizenship and American national identity. This thesis takes a step towards building up a picture of these relationships, albeit with a different approach to the analysis of gendered representations in texts. However, this project has of necessity been limited to a relatively small sample of texts. While this means that I cannot make any claims about the breadth of the findings, the strength of such an approach is the depth of the analysis and the ability to provide a detailed account of the gendered logics at works in the speeches and films.

Ideally, if space were not an issue, the selection of films would have included more than one popular film from each period. In the 1970s and 1980s, there are several other films that could have been incorporated: *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *Coming Home* (1978), *Platoon* (1986), or *Good Morning, Vietnam* (1987). In the post-Cold War era, *Tigerland* (2000) and *Rules of Engagement* (2000) are both good candidates. No doubt, a wider selection of films would have revealed other similarities with and divergences from official representations. In terms of expanding the number of time periods, the project has not examined either the 1960s (e.g., *The Green Berets* [1968]), nor the post-9/11 period (e.g., *We Were Soldiers* [2002]). These two films are particularly interesting, since they both deploy the Western as the generic structure for Vietnam representation. Its reappearance in the latter film reveals the Western's long-term resilience as a foundational myth upon which popular constructions of US identity can continue to draw (contra Hellmann's arguments concerning *The Deer Hunter*).

Alternatively, the idea of 'crisis periods' themselves could have been rejected as a 'simplification too far' in the analyst's need to overlay order and regularity on the inherently messy discursive realm. Narratives and representations do not change as a result of 'real world events' in any causal linear fashion, and the films could have been selected for their hegemonic status alone. Nonetheless, the findings presented here have demonstrated the value of examining texts for transformations in their constructions.

More broadly speaking, this study did not seek to juxtapose popular films with Vietnam War films that were less successful or well-known (such as *In Country* [1989], *Jacob's Ladder* [1990] or *Heaven and Earth* [1993], for example), in order to identify marginalised discourses and representations and juxtapose these against those found in hegemonic texts. Nor did it examine popular films which deliberately satirise Vietnam representations (*Hot Shots! Part Deux* [1993], *Tropic Thunder* [2008]) – precisely those films where one might expect that traditional assumptions about gender, as well as war, might be subverted and undermined. Given the importance of the Western as a genre for Vietnam representation in two of the three films interrogated here, extending the analysis to include other Westerns might also prove fruitful – especially other Vietnam War films which display similar generic conventions. (Although such a modification to the research design would have forced the marginalisation of one of the study's objectives, namely, to study hegemonic films regardless of their status as examples of intertextuality.)

As noted in chapter 1, there are films which are popularly understood to be 'about' Vietnam without having been set during that era (e.g., *Night of the Living Dead* [1968], *M*A*S*H** [1970], *Star Wars* [1977], *Aliens* [1986]). The conflict's gendered and racialised dimensions and legacies are identifiable in, for example, *Night of the Living Dead*'s critical exploration of (in)security as a dimension of the social relationships between white women and black men in the US; in the deployment of subaltern masculine subject-positions in order to critique US foreign policy and US military institutions in *M*A*S*H**; in how *Star Wars* allegorically appropriates the Viet Cong's tactics as a feature of US identity, in a way similar to *Rambo II*, in order to disavow US defeat in Indochina; and in the iconic heroine, Ellen Ripley, in *Aliens*. Furthermore, three of these four titles are the first pictures in trilogies and series, which opens up new approaches to the study of intertextuality over time, with the opportunity to study continuity and evolution in character arcs and the ways in which concepts are reworked in later instalments.

At an even more general level, an analysis of popular (non-Vietnam War) films from the post-Vietnam era (see, e.g., Corrigan 1991) would tell a different story, again, about the ways in which Vietnam profoundly shaped US cultural understandings of

self and other, conflict, soldiers and gender. In particular, examining post-Vietnam films about other wars, such as the Second World War (e.g., *Saving Private Ryan* [1998], *Pearl Harbor* [2002]), post-Cold War interventions (e.g., *Black Hawk Down* [2001]), and/or post-9/11 films about Iraq and Afghanistan (e.g., *In the Valley of Elah* [2007], *Lions For Lambs* [2007], *Hurt Locker* [2008], *Brothers* [2009], *Green Zone* [2010]) would no doubt illuminate these transformations and continuities. Beyond films, other popular cultural artefacts, such as TV shows, both about Vietnam and other conflicts, documentaries, novels, magazines, oral histories and other books about the Vietnam War, would perhaps substantiate but, in any case, certainly complexify the findings presented here.

Looking to the other set of texts analysed here, there were thousands of presidential documents that could have been selected for analysis, most notably, all of the documents which contained references to Vietnam, key 'war' and 'crisis' addresses, or Veterans Day and Memorial Day addresses, speeches about Vietnam given during the conflict, and a whole host of other official policy documents, from the State Department, the Department of Defense, the various branches of the US military, and Congress. On this last point, it might be particularly interesting to explore the Congressional record for representations of its own gendered identity(ies), given the preoccupation with feminising this institution in *Rambo II, Forrest Gump*, and the speeches of four of the five presidents discussed here. RAND Corporation studies, as well as reports from other policy institutes, would offer other avenues for research.

It would also be valuable to examine the intertextuality of the representations that have been identified in these films with academic international relations texts and foreign policy analyses of the Vietnam War. It is essential to understand and analyse our own scholarly constructions as cultural representations, in order to remain intellectually honest about the ways in which we as scholars (and therefore also practitioners) of world politics are implicated in the maintenance and transformation of the cultural resources available to both policy-makers and producers of popular culture.

Sub-altern accounts, such as those of US anti-war activists and, above all, the subjugated knowledges of Vietnamese soldiers and civilians, as well as Vietnamese films about the war, offer other sources to be interrogated for the critique of gendered logics of US identity in Vietnam War representation. In such studies, it could well prove fruitful to focus on writings and other representations created by women (e.g., female military personnel, medical personnel, journalists and producers of popular cultural artefacts), as these might offer fresh insights into gendered dynamics during and after the Vietnam War.

The Limits of Intertextual Analysis

Methodologically speaking, further research that applied different analytical approaches to the study of films will create different readings. Although I integrated a discussion of race into this gendered analysis, focusing centrally on race, or on class, for example, would draw out other facets of the construction of US identity and the ways in which these are deployed in support of US military intervention. Combining the analysis provided in chapters 3-7 with greater discussion of US foreign policy *practices* in the post-Vietnam era would shed new light on the ways in which gendered logics of representation function.[1] Integrating a critical political economy approach, one which analysed the production of these specific films, and the dynamics of Hollywood more broadly, would add yet another dimension to the claims about how popular cultural texts are implicated in the ways in which world politics 'works'.

However, the findings also invite further reflection concerning the utility of intertextuality as a concept, and discourse analysis as a method. First, the argument that the study of popular culture is important to the study of IR implies that popular cultural artefacts should be studied in their own right, not only when 'tethered' to 'conventional' IR texts and analysed for the structural congruencies they share with texts considered central to the discipline. Intertextuality does, to a certain extent,

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[1] An almost throw-away comment in Dan Hahn's (1987a) analysis of Gerald Ford's rhetoric exemplifies this: 'We [the US] had just "lost" Viet Nam and were feeling somewhat abused – tired of being "pushed around" by every "Second rate" power in the world... *Mayaguez* gave us an opportunity to flex our muscles, to "reassert our manhood"' (324).

risk replicating Gregg's analytical conceit that it 'goes without saying' that the documents and representations of foreign policy elites, or the 'real world' of events and actions, remain the fundamental basis for all IR research.

This thesis was not concerned with soldiers', veterans', policy-makers' or the US public's understandings of Vietnam War films or their interpellations of the identities therein. It would have been almost impossible to reconstruct audiences' understandings of the films at the time of their release, and harder still to identify the national reception to presidential speeches (polling data being capable of grasping neither the complexity of interpretations nor the processes by which they are produced). However, the findings presented here beg a number of theoretical questions about the utility of discourse analysis for comprehending the *visual dimensions* of popular culture; in accounting for the *emotional and affective dynamics* inherent in processes of meaning-making; and for understanding the role of *practice* in interpretation and in audiences' consumption and (re-)production of meanings.

Further research could also provide a more theoretically sophisticated account of the interplay between narrative and spectacle at work in films. Claudia Springer (1988), for example, has argued that a film which contains an ostensibly anti-war narrative can, through the ways in which combat is visually represented, provide the spectator with a sense of exhilaration and fulfilment such that the critical potential of that narrative is undermined. To test the validity of such a claim requires an understanding of the emotions that spectators experience when watching films – which, in turn, demands analysis of audience consumption and cultural practices. The two excerpts below are taken from Anthony Swofford's (2003) account of his experiences in preparing for deployment prior to the 1991 Gulf War. They are long but worth presenting in full because they vividly demonstrate why we need, as scholars of IR, to analyse the roles of the visual, of affect/emotion and of audiences' practices in our analyses of culture:

> we send a few guys downtown to rent all of the war movies they can get their hands on. They also buy a hell of a lot of beer. For three days we sit in our rec room and drink all of the beer and watch all of those damn movies,

> and we yell Semper fi and we head-butt and beat the crap out of each other and we get off on the various visions of carnage and violence and deceit, the raping and killing and pillaging. We concentrate on the Vietnam films because it's the most recent war, and the successes and failures of that war helped write our training manuals. We rewind and review famous scenes... Robert Duvall and his helicopter gunships during *Apocalypse Now*... Martin Sheen floating up the fake Vietnamese Congo... we watch Willem Dafoe get shot by a friendly and left on the battlefield in *Platoon*; and we listen closely as Matthew Modine talks trash to a streetwalker in *Full Metal Jacket*. We watch again the ragged, tired, burnt-out fighters walking through the villes and the pretty native women smiling because if they don't smile, the fighters might kill their pigs or burn their cache of rice. We rewind the rape scenes when American soldiers return from the bush after killing many VC to sip cool beers in a thatch bar while whores sit on their laps for a song or two (a song from the fifties when America was still sweet) before they retire to rooms and fuck the whores... American boys, brutal, young farm boys or tough city boys, sweetly fuck the whores. Yes, somehow the films convince us that these boys are sweet, even though we know we are much like these boys and that we are no longer sweet.
>
> (Swofford 2003: 5-6)

Having discussed the types of films consumed, how the marines watch them, upon which scenes and images they particularly focus, and how the films affect them emotionally, Swofford reflects more explicitly on the radically contrasting meanings made of these filmic images and narratives by civilians and soldiers:

> There is talk that many Vietnam films are antiwar, that the message is war is inhumane and look what happens when you train young American men to fight and kill, they turn their fighting and killing everywhere, they ignore their targets and desecrate the entire country, shooting fully automatic, forgetting they were trained to aim. But actually, Vietnam war films are all pro-war, no matter what the supposed message, what Kubrick or Coppola or Stone intended. Mr. and Mrs. Johnson in Omaha or San Francisco or Manhattan will watch the films and weep and decide once and for all that war is inhumane and terrible, and they will tell their friends at church and their family this, but Corporal Johnson at Camp Pendleton and Sergeant Johnson at Travis Air Force Base and Seaman Johnson at Coronado Naval Station and Spec 4 Johnson at Fort Bragg and Lance Corporal Swofford at Twentynine Palms Marine Corps Base watch the same films and are excited by them, because the magic brutality of the films celebrates the terrible and despicable beauty of their fighting skills. Fight, rape, war, pillage, burn. Filmic images of death and carnage are pornography for the military man; with film you are stroking his cock, tickling his balls with the pink feather of history, getting him ready for his real First Fuck. It doesn't matter how many Mr. and Mrs. Johnsons are antiwar—the actual killers who know how to use the weapons are not.
>
> (Swofford 2003: 6-7)

This quote reveals that popular cultural texts can be deployed to very different ends, depending upon audiences' subject-positionings and upon the concrete cultural contexts in which people watch/read/play/consume/participate. It should also serve as to remind us how little we as IR scholars know, empirically speaking, about the practices of consumption, and about the ways in which processes of meaning-making are influenced by our emotional engagement with texts. This is true of any text, since discourses are never consumed in narrowly 'rational' ways, despite the frequent (if unspoken) assumption of 'rationality' on the part of the reader, in terms of how arguments, claims and assumptions are processed and understood. However, it is perhaps especially important in the case of texts which have a visual dimension, because visual artefacts are so often treated as though they offer unmediated access to the meanings therein.

Starting from the findings presented in this thesis, and with Swofford's disclosure of the importance of popular culture to the practices of US military personnel, my next research project aims to explore the relationships between popular media texts, technologies, genres and practices, and US military institutions and practices (of, e.g., recruitment/enlistment, training, deployment, combat, rest and recreation, as well as the adaptation to post-military civilian life). It does so through observation of the practices in which current and former US military personnel engage, and the texts that they consume (particularly those they create themselves, such as milblogs and YouTube videos), and through the solicitation of their own interpretations of these texts and practices, with a focus on the emotional and affective dimensions of their accounts. Such research is already being conducted within cultural studies (see, for example, Jonathan Pieslak's [2009] study of the roles played by music in the US war in Iraq). However, it is essential that IR scholars concerned with popular cultural analysis begin to take seriously the role of the visual, the dynamics of emotion and the dimension of practice in our research. In doing so, we will be able to move beyond the discursive analysis of texts in an abstract sense, towards an engagement with the diverse publics who consume and reinterpret texts in their daily lives, and how these are implicated in political processes.

Appendix 1: US Presidential Documents – Supplementary Corpus

Documents were selected through electronic searches on the American Presidency Project (available online at http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/), using the following criteria:

- *"Vietnam*"* in the title AND *"war"* in the text, between 7 May 1975 and 31 December 1996 (inclusive)

This search generated 21 documents. These documents were skim-read for relevance and three documents were discarded from the supplementary corpus on the basis that "war" occurred within the words "awarded" or "awareness". The remaining 18 documents are listed, by president, in tables 9.1 – 9.5, below.

Table 9.1: Presidential Documents – Gerald Ford

Title of Document	Date	Citation
Statement on Terminating the Eligibility Period for **Vietnam** Era Veterans Benefits	7 May, 1975	1975a
Letter to the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate Transmitting Proposed Legislation To Terminate the Eligibility Period for **Vietnam** Era Veterans Education Benefits	7 May, 1975	1975b
Letter to Mrs. Philip A. Hart on Amnesty for **Vietnam**-Era Draft Evaders and Deserters	19 January, 1977	1977b

Source: http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/

Table 9.2: Presidential Documents – Jimmy Carter

Title of Document	Date	Citation
Proclamation 4647 – **Vietnam** Veterans Week, 1979	20 March, 1979	1979b
Vietnam Veterans Week, 1979, Remarks at a White House Reception	30 May, 1979	1979c
Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bill, Remarks on Signing S.J. Res. 119 Into Law	1 July, 1980	1980b

Source: http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/

Table 9.3: Presidential Documents – Ronald Reagan

Title of Document	Date	Citation
Proclamation 4841 – National Day of Recognition for Veterans of the **Vietnam** Era	23 April, 1981	1981c
Remarks at a Ceremony Commemorating the Initiation of the **Vietnam** Veterans Leadership Program	10 November, 1981	1981d
Remarks at a Ceremony Honoring an Unknown Serviceman of the **Vietnam** Conflict	25 May, 1984	1984b
Remarks at Memorial Day Ceremonies Honoring an Unknown Serviceman of the **Vietnam** Conflict	28 May, 1984	1984c
Remarks at Dedication Ceremonies for the **Vietnam** Veterans Memorial Statue	11 November, 1984	1984d
Remarks at the Veterans Day Ceremony at the **Vietnam** Veterans Memorial	11 November, 1988	1988b

Source: http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/

Table 9.4: Presidential Documents – George H. W. Bush

Title of Document	Date	Citation
Remarks at the Dedication Ceremony for the **Vietnam** Veterans Memorial in Dallas, Texas	11 November, 1989	1989c
Proclamation 6506 - **Vietnam** Veterans Memorial 10th Anniversity [sic] Day, 1992	10 November, 1992	1992b

Source: http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/

Table 9.5: Presidential Documents – Bill Clinton

Title of Document	Date	Citation
Remarks at a Memorial Day Ceremony at the **Vietnam** Veterans Memorial	31 May, 1993	1993c
Statement on United States Policy Toward **Vietnam**	2 July, 1993	1993d
Remarks Announcing the Normalization of Diplomatic Relations With **Vietnam**	11 July, 1995	1995b
Remarks Announcing Agent-Orange Related Disability Benefits for **Vietnam** Veterans and an Exchange With Reporters	28 May, 1996	1996b

Source: http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/

Appendix 2: Summary of *The Deer Hunter*

The Deer Hunter is the story of three second-generation Ukrainian-American friends: Michael 'Mike' Vronsky (played by Robert De Niro), Nikanor 'Nick' Chevotarevich (Christopher Walken) and Steven, also known as 'Steve' or 'Stevie' (John Savage).[1] The film opens with a carefully-framed shot of Clairton, the fictional working-class Pennsylvania steel town that is the location of much of the film. We are introduced to the central characters through scenes of their work at the steel mill, and the camaraderie they share with their fellow workers at the end of their shift. Michael, Nick and Steven, along with their other two friends, Stanley ("Stash") and Axel, are hunting buddies who are shown drinking and engaging in coarse repartee and daredevil behaviour.[2] The film's narrative focuses for the most part on Robert De Niro's character and the spectator is positioned to identify predominantly with Michael. It is quickly established, through both the men's dialogue, and interspersed shots of a bride and (separately) bridesmaids preparing themselves, that this is the day of Steven's wedding to Angela (and that Angela is pregnant).

The first third of the film is set in Clairton, and includes Steven's wedding and the reception, and the final deer hunt in the mountains just before the three leave for Vietnam. As a social institution, the hunt seems almost more important to the men than does the wedding. As the Michael and Nick get ready for the wedding, in the trailer that the two share, Michael expounds on his (gendered) "one shot" theory of deer hunting ("two is pussy. ... A deer has to be taken with one shot" and he "ain't gonna hunt with no assholes") but, despite Michael's claim that he only hunts with the group because Nick is there, and would hunt alone if Nick were not taking part, Nick admits that he doesn't "think that much about one shot anymore" and that he just "like[s] the way the trees are in the mountains". Hunting plays an obviously important role in Michael's life, much more so than in the others'.

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[1] No surname is given for the character of Steven in the film's credits, although some websites suggest that his surname is Pushkov (see, for example the Wikipedia website devoted to *The Deer Hunter* [Wikipedia, no date c]).

[2] John, the owner of the local bar where these five hang out, is also part of the hunting gang.

This first section, set entirely in the US, contains a high degree of improvised dialogue and action – in particular, during the wedding reception – and the extras (including the choir who sing at the wedding) are 'authentic' residents of the town as opposed to professional actors.[3] The effect is to create a naturalistic setting in which the audience learns about and increasingly empathises with the characters as we are witness to the commonplace and everyday mundanity of their interactions with each other within the group of friends, during the formal ceremonies of the Russian Orthodox wedding (Nick is Steven's best man and Angela's chief bridesmaid is Nick's girlfriend, Linda, played by Meryl Streep), and the informal and raucous celebrations at the reception afterwards.

The reception hall itself is dominated, on one wall, by three large photos of Michael, Nick and Steven, and, at the front, by a large banner, which declares that they are "serving God and country proudly". That the three men are more a focus of the day's events (and of the film) than is the happy couple is reinforced by the lack of any dialogue with, or the appearance of any photos of, the bride during this first segment. Indeed, Angela's only important role appears to be foreshadowing the failure of the marriage and the tragic events that are to befall Steven in Vietnam, as she fatefully spills some drops of red wine from the wedding cup (according to superstition, a symbol of bad luck).

Three incidents that occur during the night of the reception deserve comment. The first is the way in which the relationship between Nick, Linda and Michael develops: Cimino declares on the DVD commentary (2003) that Linda is in love with both men. This triangular relationship becomes more overt in later scenes, when we see Linda demonstrate her affections for Michael, but during the reception, it is most obvious in the series of looks that both Nick and Michael cast in her direction throughout the evening, and by the looks that Linda returns to Michael, as well as the fact that Nick deliberately orchestrates events so that Michael and Linda spend some time together, just after Nick has (half-heartedly) asked Linda to marry him.

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[3] Similarly, the character of Axel was played by Chuck Aspegren, the foreman who had shown Cimino and De Niro around the steel mill when they were scouting for locations; Aspegren had no previous acting experience (DVD commentary).

The second incident occurs in the back-room bar of the reception hall, between the three friends and a Green Beret (Army Airborne Ranger) who has (in a rather contrived scene) entered the venue for a drink.[4] When the men raise their glasses in a toast to him, and try to buy him a drink and find out something about the war in Southeast Asia ("what's it like over there?" "Can you tell us anything?"), the soldier is cold and aloof: "fuck it" are his only words. Inasmuch as the Green Beret's terse 'fuck it' is the only direct comment anyone utters about the Vietnam War in the entire film, it is simultaneously a critical and an apathetic/apolitical comment. This (lack of a) statement on US engagement in Vietnam prefigures the trio's experiences of the chaos of war in later scenes.

The final event occurs at the end of the night, as the bridal couple are preparing to leave the reception in Michael's car. We hear Steven confide in Nick that he has never slept with Angela – although he clearly knows about the baby – thus implying that she has been unfaithful to him, although Nick responds to the announced pregnancy with "great, that's great". On the other side of the car, we catch (the tail end of) an exchange between Stash and Michael, Stash taunting him with "you didn't know that about Angela, did you?... I happen to know it's true" and Michael denouncing this information as "bullshit". Immediately after this exchange, Michael begins to run in front of the car, stripping off his clothes and shoes as he runs, until he eventually comes to a halt on the basketball court, completely naked, until Nick catches up with him.

This scene is ambiguous, since the reason for Michael's symbolic flight from the trappings of society is never revealed. However, as Susan Jeffords has pointed out (1989: 94), it is possible that Stash has just told Michael that Nick is the father of Angela's baby. This would go some way towards explaining both Nick's reticence with Linda and his casual attempts to set her up with Michael, and Michael's extreme reaction to the information from Stash, given the faith Michael has earlier declared in Nick. Nick and Michael sit on the basketball court, Michael partially covered by Nick's jacket, and it is at this point that the second (and, arguably, more important) of two

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[4] The Green Beret first appears immediately after Axel has playfully asked his girlfriend 'do you wanna fuck or fight?', foreshadowing with his question that the trio are off to war rather than remaining in Clairton with Linda and Angela.

promises in the film (the other being the wedding vows) is made: Nick begs Michael not to leave him "over there" in Vietnam if anything should happen. (The strength of Michael and Nick's relationship is later demonstrated by Michael's return to Vietnam in an attempt to rescue Nick and fulfil this promise, while Steven and Angela's relationship is shown to be much more fragile).

Rousing choral music segues into the pink tinges of dawn in the background as we see the car containing the group travel up the valley in the foreground. Five of the six men are squashed into the car (Steven is not present), and we see further evidence of their camaraderie, as Michael plays a trick on Axel when he gets out of the car to urinate, driving off without him (twice). The shots of the car driving are filmed from a distance, so that the scale of the rugged landscape is felt. As the group prepare to go hunting, Michael refuses to let Stash borrow his gear and Stash accuses Michael of being gay. Michael, however, is revealed as in his element in the mountains. He is shown to have the correct (and additional spare) equipment, to care for his gun and to pursue the hunt single-mindedly, while Stash and Axel fool about. As Cimino and film critic F. X. Feeney remark in conversation on the DVD commentary, 'Bob [De Niro] is clearly the alpha wolf' in the group of friends. We see the men emerge from the hunting cabin and as they set off up the mountain, the peaks of other mountains emerge form the mist and the music starts up again. Shots of the deer are filmed from below, with the camera placed on or very close to the ground, emphasising the majesty of the animal and of nature. Michael is the only one who successfully shoots a stag, which is strapped to the bonnet of the car as they drive back into Clairton in the evening. The men enter the bar, drinking and singing, and exploding cans of beer over each other. John plays a Chopin nocturne on the piano in the corner as the men become pensive and quiet. The camera pans across each face as they watch him play.

The jump cut from Clairton to wartime is radical and abrupt. From listening to the melancholy music in the bar, the image quickly shifts to violent action in Vietnam, with a shot of a US helicopter dropping napalm on a Vietnamese village. We see Michael (now an Airborne Army Ranger) unconscious on the ground while a (North Vietnamese) soldier drops a hand grenade into a bunker full of villagers and then turns to gun down a woman and child. The fire power of the helicopters is echoed by

Michael's use of a flamethrower to dispatch the enemy soldier, at which point Nick and Steven show up (somewhat conveniently for the narrative), just in time for all three to be overrun by enemy troops.

The entire combat sequence lasts just three minutes. In the next shot, Michael, Nick and Steven are prisoners of war (POWs), held in bamboo cages almost completely submerged in a muddy river, and forced by their NVA/NLF captors to play Russian roulette while the Vietnamese prison guards bet on the outcome. The roulette sequences in the prison camp are brutal, graphic and emotionally disturbing. We witness the traumatic effects of the roulette game, and of the waiting, on the American and Asian captives,[5] and their eventual selection as participants in the game is itself experienced by the POWs as a form of roulette. These scenes vividly contrast Michael's mental strength with both Steven's and Nick's loss of control. Steven cannot fire the gun directly at his temple (which saves his life, as the bullet misses his brain), and, when Michael suggests that they need to play with more bullets in order to have enough ammunition to stand a chance of killing their guards and escaping, Nick is unable to play until Michael has sternly talked him into it.

The trio's escape is also entirely down to Michael. Michael and Nick successfully use the guns with the additional bullets to shoot their way out of the compound, and liberate Steven from his submerged river-cage. They swim downriver but become separated as they attempt to climb into a US helicopter. Nick is airlifted away but Steven falls back into the river and Michael also falls, or deliberately drops, after him. Steven tells Michael that he fell on some rocks and we see his broken leg. Michael carries Steven up the riverbank and the next shot is of a road full of fleeing Vietnamese refugees. A Vietnamese military jeep stops and takes Steven away, as Michael keep on walking.

The narrative then follows Nick in Saigon for a short time, and we see him in the US military hospital, completely broken, watching the coffins of KIAs being loaded onto trucks. He fishes a picture of Linda out of his wallet but when a doctor approaches

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[5] The identities of the non-Caucasian captives are never made clear. They may be South Vietnamese (ARVN) or Thai, Filipino or South Korean mercenaries.

him, he is unable to remember any details about his parents (such as their names or dates of birth). He also cannot bring himself to ring Linda back home. Wandering the streets of Saigon, he goes to a bar, where he picks up a Vietnamese prostitute.[6] They go upstairs and the woman asks him what he would like to call her ("Linda"), but the noise of a crying infant in the room with them makes him angrily resist her attempts to undress him. Nick leaves the brothel and, hearing gunshots, finds himself in a yard with a Frenchman who sits, smoking, in a car. The dead bodies with single bullet holes in their skulls indicate that they are casualties of Russian roulette. The Frenchman entices him to play, and we see the interior of a Saigon gambling den where people are betting noisily on the outcome of a game in progress. Nick grabs the gun, 'shoots' a participant and then himself, before walking out, neither attempt having fired the lone bullet still in the chamber. Michael is present during this encounter, and tries to catch up with Nick when he leaves, but Nick gets into the Frenchman's car and, although he appears to have seen Michael, turns away from him, throwing his money into the air and creating a crowd in the street, effectively blocking Michael's way.

Ultimately, the diegetic focus shifts back to Michael, as the audience is witness, when he returns to the US, to his estrangement and alienation from the small-town community. When he sees, from his seat in the back of the taxi, that the gang have organised a large 'Welcome Home' party for him, he asks the driver to continue driving and he spends the night in a motel, unable to face his friends. (Cimino comments, at this point, that Michael has, in effect, become the Green Beret from

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[6] The music playing in the bar is 'Midnight Train to Georgia' by Gladys Knight and the Pips, which dates this scene to August 1973 or later. It is almost impossible to date with any certainty of the events that take place in *The Deer Hunter*, since there are no overt references to global, national or regional events of the time. There is absolutely no mention of any peace protests or other anti-war sentiment from any of the characters, nor any discussion of how the US is faring militarily in Southeast Asia. Other than the music playing in the Saigon bar, the only indicators are the infant, seen later, in Angela's apartment (presumably the baby with whom she was pregnant during the wedding), who looks to be about two or three years old, and the chaos at the embassy in Saigon when Michael arrives to attempt to rescue Nick (which Cimino tells us is supposed to represent the last days of the South Vietnamese state in late April 1975). However, the disillusionment expressed so succinctly by the Green Beret at the wedding reception most probably situates the wedding after the Tet Offensive of January 1968 and, using the infant as a marker, it is likely that the three men first went to Vietnam sometime in 1970 or 1971.

the wedding reception scene.) We see that Michael has the same picture of Linda in his wallet that Nick looked at in the hospital in Saigon. The next day, Michael watches from a distance until everyone has left the trailer, before revealing his presence to Linda. Very bluntly, he tells her, somewhat cryptically, 'I'm feeling a lot of distance'. Michael also visits Angela, who appears to spend every day lethargic and unresponsive in bed at home, and learns that Steven is in a Veterans' Administration (VA) hospital.

After some scenes re-establishing that life has continued as normal in Clairton, the film transitions into the second hunt, which is depicted in very different terms from the first. Michael sets out, alone, from the cabin, to hunt (accompanied by solemn, melancholy choral music). His quiet, determined, approach is juxtaposed with that of John and Axel, who scramble quickly and noisily across the scree, yelling and shooting several times. Stash also yells and runs wildly, chasing his deer into the small lake near the cabin, while the other two laugh at him. Michael, meanwhile, comes across a buck himself but, despite tracking it skilfully across the mountainside (as the music momentarily returns, in a much more rousing timbre), his aim is off and he misses the deer entirely. He speaks to the deer ('Okay?') as it wanders off and he sits on the edge of a waterfall, where he yells out ('Okay?!') and hears his echo.

The next scene is in the interior of the cabin, in which Stash is fussing with a small revolver. Axel makes fun of its size, calling it a 'stupid little gun', as well as of Stash's girlfriends (implying that they are promiscuous), and Stash cocks and aims the gun at Axel. Stash appears visibly angry, although Axel merely continues to laugh. At this point, Michael enters the cabin and wrestles the gun out of Stash's hands. Stash yells out 'What did you do that for?! What, did you think it was loaded?!'. Michael checks the barrel and aims it at Stash, who instinctively cowers. When Michael points the gun in the air and fires, a shot rings out, and Michael spills the rest of the bullets onto the table. Michael reloads one bullet, spins the barrel and places the gun squarely between Stash's eyes, where he taunts him before firing, which clicks harmlessly onto the next chamber. Axel and John are visibly shocked, and Stash is silent on the floor. Michael storms out and throws the gun off the mountainside. The men are

noticeably subdued upon their return to the town, unpacking the car in complete silence.

We next see Michael in town, where he visits Linda at work, only to find her crying, for some unknown reason. When she leaves work and sees Michael waiting in the car, she accepts a ride from him, asking 'Did you ever think life would turn out like this?', to which his reply is, simply, 'No'. Gradually, at Linda's initiation, they begin some sort of intimate (it is implied, sexual) relationship, although Michael remains awkward, uncomfortable and aloof. Michael leaves the trailer once Linda is asleep, and calls Steven, who is spending his days playing bingo. While visiting Steven (now a double amputee, and clearly suffering with mental health issues), he discovers that someone is sending Steven money from Saigon and surmises that Nick is still alive. After 'rescuing' Steven from the VA hospital (against Michael's express wishes), in the very next scene, Michael returns to Vietnam (in a helicopter, landing on the roof of the US embassy, as we witness the chaos that is Saigon about to 'fall') in an attempt to rescue Nick, and finds him playing Russian roulette in the Saigon gambling den, but is unable to save Nick from killing himself. The narrative winds up back in Clairton, in the bar in which the men had formerly enjoyed good times, after Nick's funeral. Previously an all-male and masculine space, the bar is now symbolically penetrated by women/femininity, as Linda and Angela are present for the wake. The film ends with the seven friends singing 'God Bless America' in memory of their lost friend.

Appendix 3: Summary of *Rambo: First Blood, Part II*

Rambo: First Blood Part II opens with an explosion in a quarry, revealed to be the prison in which Stallone's character, Jonny Rambo, is now incarcerated, sentenced to several years' hard labour as punishment for his previous crimes.[1,2] Rambo is hard at work, breaking rocks, his shirt soaked with sweat, although the work does not appear difficult for him. Colonel Trautman is waiting at the perimeter fence and when Rambo is brought over to him by a prison guard, his face giving away no emotion whatsoever, we learn that a computer has selected Rambo as one of three operatives most able to complete a dangerous reconnaissance mission that involves returning to Vietnam to gather solid evidence of American POWs. Rambo's knowledge of the area is based on his own incarceration as a POW in the region during the war. If Rambo successfully completes his mission, there is the possibility of a Presidential pardon. As Trautman turns to leave, Rambo asks him 'do we get to win this time?' Trautman's response: 'this time it's up to you'.

The base for the mission is in Thailand, evoked aurally and visually through twangy oriental music, giant statues of a golden Buddha, peasants wearing conical hats and working in rice paddies and a sunrise backdrop to the helicopter landing in the foreground. Rambo is first introduced to Ericson,[3] another operative on the mission, whose greeting ('so you're the chosen one, huh?') invites a parallel with Jesus. As Rambo walks from the helicopter, he appears calm and relaxed, almost Zen-like; no longer physically and mentally traumatised. Murdock, the CIA agent in charge of Special Operations and the mission commander, represents the Congressional

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[1] On the trilogy special edition DVD, the 'making of' short documentary film features interviews with Sylvester Stallone and Richard Crenna (Colonel Trautman), among others. We learn that *Rambo II* was 'carefully researched' and filmed in 'the untamed jungles of Mexico, where director George Cosmatos set out to create an air of realism' and where the actors went through 'every realistic thing in the world like mud and mosquitoes and heat and humidity'. Stallone 'hope[s] to establish a character that can represent a certain section of the American consciousness and through the entertainment also be educational' about 'the reality of jungle warfare'. In particular, technical advisors who had performed tours of duty in Vietnam 'keep me honest and keep the story honest' (Stallone).

[2] Rambo's crimes are the focal point of the narrative of *First Blood*. This scene visually references *Spartacus* (1961) (Wimmer 1989: 186), implying that Rambo has been unjustly enslaved, rather than justly imprisoned.

[3] Martin Kove, the actor who plays Ericson, had recently played the 'villain' Sensei (karate instructor) in *The Karate Kid* (1984).

Committee which is charged with investigating the possibility that US POWs are still being held captive in Vietnam. He is sweating profusely, and requires air-conditioning and a constant supply of chilled Cokes from a vending machine. In contrast, Rambo is calm and composed, looking totally at ease in the heat, as he had done in the penitentiary earlier. Murdock recaps the highlights of Rambo's life and career, beginning by noting that Rambo's mixed Native American-German ancestry is 'a hell of a combination'. A specialist in light weapons, Rambo is also skilled as a medic, a helicopter pilot and at foreign languages. He has fifty-nine confirmed kills, two Silver Stars, four Bronze Stars, four Purple Hearts, the Distinguished Service Cross and the Congressional Medal of Honor. Murdock appears unimpressed and his tone is dismissive.

Murdock mentions the estimated two and a half thousand troops still missing (presumed killed) in action in Vietnam, interrupting himself to order another Coke, then explains that he fought at Kon Tum in 1966; 'I lost a lot of men, so I know what you and every vet feels. Maybe the government didn't care, maybe certain segments of the population didn't care... my committee cares'. However, he also takes pains to remind Rambo that under no circumstances is he to engage the enemy. Rambo's job is merely to obtain photographic evidence of the POWs, not to attempt a rescue. Trautman talks Rambo through the mission, explaining that he will be taking more equipment because he is going in solo: 'don't try the blood and guts routine. Let technology do most of the work'. Trautman's other piece of advice is to try and forget the war, but for Rambo, 'while I'm still alive, it's still alive'. Murdock insists that Rambo should feel totally safe, because he will be armed with the best weapons in the world. Rambo counters that he always believed that 'the mind is the best weapon'. 'Times change', according to Murdock. When Rambo has gone to prepare, Trautman and Murdock discuss Rambo's mental state, with Murdock worried that Rambo is still unbalanced. Trautman replies angrily that 'Rambo is the best combat vet I've ever seen, a pure fighting machine with only a desire to win a war that someone else lost... What you choose to call hell, he calls home'.

The following sequence is dominated by visual information, containing no dialogue, juxtaposing Rambo's solitary preparations for the mission – sharpening his knife,

lacing up his boots, putting arrows into a black leather quiver – with the technology utilised by the agents working at the base, the banks of computers, the recorded countdowns and the aeroplane starting up, with its rows of switches, dials and lights. Murdock and Trautman exchange thoughts about the Vietnam War, with Murdock claiming that 'it wasn't my war, Colonel. I'm just here to clean up the mess'. We see more buttons and radar screens, and hear the agents use incomprehensible technical jargon and acronyms. Just before he gets on the plane, Rambo informs Trautman that Murdock has been lying about his military past in Vietnam, and Rambo confides in Trautman that Trautman is the only one involved with the mission whom Rambo trusts.

When Rambo's cumbersome equipment gets caught as he leaps from the plane with his parachute, he nearly dies, but eventually is able to use his knife to cut the strap and get away. Upon hearing about the accident, Murdock immediately wants to abort the mission, claiming that Rambo could not have survived the fall. When Trautman argues with him, he agrees to continue with the mission as planned, but reminds Trautman that in 36 hours they will be leaving, regardless of whether Rambo has made it safely to the extraction point. We next see Rambo on the ground, armed with just his knife and his bow and arrows, dressed in a black outfit similar to the 'pyjamas' commonly worn by the NLF (Viet Cong) during the war. He wanders cautiously around the ruins of a Buddhist temple before moving swiftly to restrain a figure, also dressed in black, who turns out to be a woman. They exchange a few terse words in Vietnamese. It appears that she is confirming her identity. She is Co, the agent he is supposed to meet.

They head to the river, where they board a boat controlled by Vietnamese pirates, although the captain of the boat wears a military-style beret. The crew drink a lot, and the captain makes an unwanted pass at Co. She and Rambo discover hidden Russian markings on the floor of the boat, which gives them cause for concern. During the journey, Rambo and Co talk about the past, especially the war and its aftermath. For Rambo, 'I came back to the States and found another war going on... kind of like a quiet war, a war against the soldiers returning... that's the kind of war you don't win'. Co explains that her father was an intelligence agent who was killed.

Co has replaced him but is looking to leave: 'There is too much death here, death everywhere. I just want to live, Rambo. Maybe go America, live the quiet life'. Rambo philosophises about his experiences – 'To survive a war, you gotta become war' – and claims that he is 'expendable' in the US. Co wears a jade necklace for good luck; Rambo has his knife. Cut to a scene back at the base, where Murdock, drinking yet another soda, reiterates his assumption that Rambo is probably dead, and tells Trautman – who has requested permission to go to the extraction zone with Ericson and another agent – that he doesn't want to take any unnecessary risks.

Rambo and Co disembark and head for the camp, where Co initially assumes that it is empty of POWs. They watch a girl in a brightly coloured *ao dai* drive up on a scooter, and the North Vietnamese guards exchange pleasantries while they fondle her. Co informs us 'cyclo-girl: whore from village'. Rambo prepares his bow and arrows with their explosive tips. Co reminds him of their orders, but Rambo is not interested in taking orders any more (he also does not appear to be carrying a camera any more). He uses his knife to cut through the perimeter fence and skirts the guards on patrol. Sneaking across the camp, he finds the hut where the US POWs are being held. All look ill, some shivering, lying supine on the rocks. A tarantula crawls up one body, but the prisoner appears too weak to care. Continuing through the camp, he finds a POW tied to an X-frame and cuts him down, telling the man 'I'll be back' for the others. As they make their escape, the POW's cough draws a guard's attention but Rambo shoots the guard in the watchtower who controls the searchlight. The noise alerts the officer being entertained by the Vietnamese prostitute, but she entices him back into his hut. Finally, Co is spotted by a third soldier but Rambo also shoots him before he can attract the attention of others.

Daylight comes and, when the Vietnamese notice that the prisoner is missing, they sound the alarm. In Thailand, Ericson wonders if it will be a waste of fuel to fly to the extraction point, since nobody except Trautman believes that Rambo will have survived this long. Back with Rambo, the POW gratefully comments that it is lucky they came when they did, as the prisoners are moved around a lot, in order to harvest crops. When Rambo questions the prisoner as to how long they have been held in this particular camp (a week) and how long it is since they were last held

there (a year), it becomes clear to Rambo and to Co that the mission was deliberately orchestrated to find only empty camps. The POW is stunned to discover that the year is 1985. The trio get back on the boat and head down-river, pursued by the Vietnamese soldiers along the bank. Kinh, the Vietnamese officer in charge who was sleeping with the prostitute the night before, has a slender and rather weedy physique and stands out from the other Vietnamese troops because of his moustache.

Before Rambo and Co get very far, the group becomes aware that they have been double-crossed, but Rambo, using a pair of tiny knives that he has ingeniously hidden about his person, launches an attack against the pirates. Urging Co and the POW to swim to shore, Rambo gets a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) launcher and shoots the chasing boat, which explodes as he leaps into the river. After making it to dry land, the group, led by Rambo, moves through the forest as stealthily as the VC did (while the Vietnamese behind them, upright and awkward, resemble more the US troops' tactics and behaviour during the Vietnam War). Leaving Co behind, Rambo and the POW make a run across exposed rice paddy terraces to the helicopter landing zone (LZ), while the Vietnamese fire mortars all around them. Ericson circles the LZ as Rambo and the POW are shown moving across the rice paddy in agonisingly slow motion. When Ericson reports back to base that Rambo has found a prisoner, the agents operating the computers cheer, but Murdock angrily orders all of them out of the room, before commanding Ericson to abort the mission.

In the helicopter, Trautman is furious about Ericson's refusal to land. 'There's men down there, *our* men.' 'No, *your* men. Don't be a hero' replies an agent. When they return to Thailand, Trautman challenges Murdock. 'It was a lie, wasn't it? Just like the whole damned war. That camp was supposed to be empty. Rambo goes in, a decorated veteran, finds no POWs, Congress buys it. Case closed'. Trautman calls Murdock 'a stinking bureaucrat who's trying to cover his ass', but Murdock reminds him that 'the whole nation's' ass is being covered by this mission. Recalling that the US reneged on US$7.2 billion that was supposed to be paid to the Vietnamese in reparations after the war, Murdock claims that keeping the POWs is their response

and that there is no domestic US interest in reopening this old wound: 'You think Congress will give billions for a few forgotten ghosts?!'.

Back in the POW camp, a trough from the pig-pen carries slurry down into a cess-pit, where Rambo is immersed up to his neck. Two large trucks roll into the camp, a helicopter lands, blowing the slurry towards Rambo's face, and a large group of Russian soldiers in grey camouflage uniforms and black berets jog through the shot, lining up in front of the cess-pit. The Russian officer in command, Lieutenant Colonel Podovsky, orders Rambo to be raised out of the pit, and as he is winched out, we see that he is tied in a crucifix position and that he is wearing just a thong (another, this time visual, reference to Jesus). Kinh punches Rambo, which prompts the Russian commander to opine that the Vietnamese people 'are so vulgar in their methods; they lack compassion'. Rambo is brought to the hut temporarily being used by Podovsky by means of a wire around his neck that appears to be choking him. Although he refers to the US POWs as war criminals, Podovsky talks to Rambo as an equal, a 'comrade', his opposite number by a quirk of fate. He tells Rambo that his capture is embarrassing (presumably to the Russians as well as the Vietnamese) and commands him to make a radio call to the US base in Thailand, explaining that he has been captured. Rambo's only response to all of Podovsky's questions is to swear at him.

That evening, similar to the previous night, a Vietnamese woman on a scooter, who turns out to be Co when seen from the front, enters the camp. As Rambo, now dressed in just his trousers and tied to a metal bed-frame (again in a crucifix position), is tortured by Yushin, Podovsky's silent brute of a sergeant, with electric shocks, Co watches from beneath the floorboards, under the hut. Podovsky taunts Rambo by reading the helicopter transmission intercept which proves that Rambo has been abandoned by Murdock and the CIA: 'And these are the people you protect with your pain... You may scream, there is no shame' and, when Rambo does not scream, 'You are strong, very strong, the strongest so far...'. Podovsky uses Rambo's own knife, glowing red from lying in the embers of the fire, to scar him, and still Rambo is silent but when the Russian threatens the US POW, Rambo agrees to talk. When the radio transmission goes through, a shot of the base in Thailand reveals that

the atmosphere is tense and everyone is sweating profusely. As Rambo's naked torso glistens with sweat, and thunder and lightning crashes outside, Rambo's muscles tauten as he grips the microphone, before issuing a threat in an unexpected direction: 'Murdock, I'm coming to get you'. As soon as he has finished speaking, Co lets loose with machine-gun fire and there follows a long protracted sequence of shots that illustrate how Co and Rambo effect their second escape.

Sunrise the next morning at the Thai warehouse: Murdock stands nervously next to a cooling fan. In Vietnam, Co asks Rambo to take him with her when he heads back through Thailand and on to the US. They kiss, and decide to depart but, almost immediately, Co is shot by Kinh. Cut to the base in Thailand again, where Trautman wants to rescue Rambo. Murdock warns him that he will be risking his career, his reputation and even his family's security, telling him that 'You're just a tool; we're the machine'. Murdock puts Trautman under arrest, with Trautman asking whether Rambo ever stood a chance. Murdock sneeringly replies, 'Like you said, he went home'. Indeed, Rambo does seem at home, as he lies in wait to get his revenge on the Russian soldiers, who are hunting him in a torrential downpour. He picks them off one by one, emerging unseen from a variety of different natural environments – trees, stone, mud, water. Having chased him to a waterfall, Kinh attempts to shoot Rambo with a machine-gun. Expending all of his ammunition unsuccessfully, he turns to his handgun, but also fails. In contrast, Rambo takes just one shot to kill Kinh with an exploding arrow.

Yushin appears, flying a helicopter (that looks like a US Huey) and drops an incendiary bomb on the area at the base of the waterfall. Since they can find no trace of Rambo, Yushin flies the helicopter closer to the water to look for him, when Rambo bursts out of the water and jumps into the helicopter, killing one soldier and wrestling with Yushin as the helicopter rises again. When Rambo eventually manages to hurl Yushin out of the helicopter and into the trees, the other Russian pilot is so scared that he jumps out of the helicopter unprovoked. Taking control of the aircraft, Rambo flies back to the camp to rescue the POWs. He attacks the camp using the helicopter's weapons, blowing up the buildings and shooting a large number of Russian and

Vietnamese soldiers in another long and drawn-out action sequence, before landing next to the POWs' hut.

As Rambo urges the POWs into the waiting aircraft, Podovsky rises menacingly over the treetops in a heavily-armed Russian Mil 24 helicopter. A US POW mans the machine-gun in Rambo's helicopter while Podovsky fires randomly, oblivious to the destruction he is causing in the village below them. Podovsky shoots at Rambo, which creates so much smoke from Rambo's damaged helicopter that visibility is impaired. As he clears a bend in the river, Podovsky sees Rambo's damaged helicopter on a bank in the riverbed in front of him, with smoke pouring from the cockpit. Landing directly opposite, Podovsky smirks as his finger twitches on the joystick trigger, but Rambo suddenly sits up and shoots an RPG out of the broken helicopter windscreen, causing Podovsky's helicopter to explode.

Rambo's radio call signal is Lone Wolf. As he announces the rescue of all of the POWs over the radio, Murdock looks worried and leaves the control room. When Rambo lands at the base, he punches Ericson in the stomach with his machine-gun, then goes looking for Murdock with the gun and a lot of ammunition. Rambo's frame is carefully silhouetted in the doorway of the control room before he destroys all of the equipment, shooting until he runs out of bullets. Finding Murdock, Rambo looks threateningly at him while Murdock attempts to talk his way out of the confrontation, arguing that 'Rambo, I don't make the orders, I take 'em, just like you'. Rambo pins him down on the desk, muttering between gritted teeth, 'mission... accomplished', before slamming his knife into the table right beside Murdock's head. He leaves Murdock with a warning: 'You know there's more men out there, you know where they are. Find 'em or I'll find you.'

The final exchange between Trautman and Rambo reveals Rambo's motivation and the way in which he feels he has been misunderstood:

Trautman: John, where are you going?

Rambo: I don't know.

Trautman: You'll get a second Medal of Honor for this.

Rambo: They should give it to them [the POWs]; they deserve it more.

Trautman: You can't keep running, John, you're free now. Come back to us.

Rambo: Back to what? My friends died here, part of me died here.

Trautman: The war, everything that happened here, may be wrong but, dammit, don't

hate your country for it!

Rambo: Hate? I'd die for it.

Trautman: Then what is it you want?

Rambo: I want... what they want, and every other guy who came over here and spilt his guts and gave everything he had wants for our country to love us as much as we love it. That's what I want.

With that, Rambo walks off and the credits roll to the film's only song, the lyrics of which are: 'Peace in our life / Remember the call / A tear for our brothers / Think of them all / Home of the brave / We'll never fall / The strength of our nation / Belongs to us all'.

Appendix 4: Summary of *Forrest Gump*

The film opens with a white feather blowing in the breeze. As the camera follows it twirling and falling slowly to earth over the town of Savannah, it very nearly lands, but at the last minute, it is carried on its journey. Everybody is oblivious – everybody, that is, except a well-dressed man in a cream suit with dirty sneakers, sitting on a park bench, who picks up the feather and traps it between the covers of his book (*Curious George*). In his suitcase are a few other items which will become meaningful throughout the film.). He has a box of chocolates on his lap. A bus stops nearby with an advertisement for a 1981-model Chevrolet Citation, thereby dating this scene to that year (we also learn later in the narrative that this scene occurs after the attempted assassination of Ronald Reagan, which took place on 30 March 1981). A young black nurse sits down on the bench next to him, and he introduces himself as 'Forrest, Forrest Gump'. This is our first introduction to the character of the eponymously-titled film. He offers the woman a chocolate, and notes that her shoes look comfortable, reciting two pieces of advice his mother gave him: 'my momma always said life was like a box of chocolates: you never know what you're gonna get' and 'momma always said that there's an awful lot you could tell about a person by their shoes: where they goin'; where they been'. She mostly ignores him, but Forrest begins to tell her his life story anyway. The film is thus for the most part a series of episodic flashbacks to Forrest's life, narrated by Forrest from the bench in the Savannah park.

The first episode we witness is young Forrest's fitting for 'magic shoes', callipers fitted to his legs to correct a curved spine – 'crooked as a politician'. After leaving the doctor's surgery, we witness Forrest and his mother walking through town (Greenbow, Alabama), while Forrest narrates the story of how he came to be called Forrest. He reveals that he was named after the slave trader, Confederate General, Civil War hero and first General Wizard (national leader) of the Ku Klux Klan, Nathan Bedford Forrest, to whom Gump's family is distantly related. We see an image of Tom Hanks, first as an old sepia photograph, which then dissolves into a moving image of him on horseback, dressed as the KKK Grand Wizard, which has been grafted onto footage from D. W. Griffith's famous 1915 film, *Birth of a Nation*.

Forrest explains that 'Momma said that the Forrest part was to remind me that sometimes we all do things that, well, just don't make no sense'. As Forrest gets his callipers stuck in a drain on the road, and the old townsfolk stare, his momma advises him 'Don't ever let anybody tell you they're better than you, Forrest. If God had intended everybody to be the same, he'd have given us *all* braces on our legs... You're the same as everybody else. You are no different'.

Almost immediately, in the next scene, this statement is contradicted by the school principal, Mr Hancock. During Mrs Gump's discussion with Mr Hancock, we see a visual representation of Forrest's IQ score in relation to the national population and in relation to county school policy (with an IQ of 75, Forrest is 5 points below the cut-off point for the county to accept him into the public school system). Forrest's mother will do anything to ensure that Forrest receives the same opportunities as other children, and, when asked 'is there a Mr Gump, Mrs Gump?', she claims he is 'on vacation' (in a rather sarcastic tone). The next shot is visually located outside the Gump household after dark (Forrest sitting on a swing), and the sounds indicate that someone is having sex inside the house. It is revealed to be Mr Hancock, who, upon his departure, attempts to engage Forrest in conversation, only for Forrest to impersonate the noises Hancock had been making earlier, to Hancock's embarrassment. When Forrest later asks his mother 'what's vacation mean?', she replies, 'vacation's when you go somewhere... and you don't ever come back', which suggests that Mr Gump has abandoned the family.

The Gump house is at the end of a long avenue of old oak trees covered in Spanish moss (referred to by the production team throughout the DVD commentary as 'Oak Alley'). The house operates as a boarding house, providing the Gumps with a steady income. We witness Forrest hanging out in what is signified to be Elvis Presley's room (through the guitar music, and Elvis's hair and accent) and dancing strangely in his callipers, and then see Elvis dancing in the same way on television. This is the first of Forrest's encounters with, and influences upon, famous people.

On his first day at school, Forrest is ostracised by the other children on the school bus, but becomes friends with Jenny Curran, which is one of the centrally important

relationships of the film. Forrest notes that they became as close as 'peas and carrots'. We witness them playing together and Jenny teaching Forrest to read. Forrest notes that Jenny never seemed to want to go home. There is a brief shot of Forrest and the nurse in present-day Savannah, followed by a return to the flashback, in which boys are taunting Forrest and throwing rocks at him, with Jenny urging him to run away. As he does so, the callipers fall from his legs and he begins to run normally. He runs, eventually arriving at Jenny's house, where his voiceover informs us that Jenny's father 'was a very loving man. He was always kissing and touching her and her sisters. And then this one time, Jenny wasn't on the bus to go to school'. Jenny's dress is torn and there appears to be a trace of blood on the sleeve, and she is clearly frightened of her father, running off as soon as he yells for her. Jenny and Forrest run into the cornfield, where Jenny prays to be turned into a bird, in order to escape. Although this prayer is not answered, 'he [God] had the police say Jenny didn't have to stay in that house no more' and she goes to live with her grandmother in a trailer, nearer to Forrest's house.[1]

The next time we see Oak Alley, it is an almost exact repeat of the previous scene in which Forrest is taunted by bullies, except that Jenny and Forrest are 16, and are now played by Robin Wright and Tom Hanks, and the bullies are chasing Forrest in a truck. He runs straight across the middle of the football field during practice and, because college scouts see him run so fast, he is offered a football scholarship to attend the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa. While he is there, he is witness to Governor George Wallace's speech opposing the desegregation of the university, mistaking a fellow student's comment about 'coons trying to get into school' as meaning raccoons, and subsequently expressing surprise that niggers would want to go to the same school as white people. When one of the black students drops a book, he picks it up and follows her into school, in order to return it, thus being the first person to enter the schoolhouse after it has been physically and symbolically desegregated.[2] We see Forrest in both the fictional film and grafted onto 'real' archival news footage of this event, giving the scene a historical weight and gravity. Forrest notes the attempted assassination of Governor Wallace a few years later, and when we return

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[1] It is not specified whether this is Jenny's maternal or paternal grandmother.

[2] Or, rather, it is Forrest's action, walking into the building after the black students, that is performative of the act of desegregation.

to the bus stop in Savannah, the black nurse seems engaged in the story and disappointed that she has to leave. However, a new person joins Forrest on the bench, so his story continues.

Jenny went to an all-girls college[3] and we see Forrest waiting for her there, in a downpour. When he hears her in a nearby car, he assumes she is being hurt, opens the door and punches her boyfriend, who then drives off. Although she is exasperated with Forrest, she sneaks him inside to her room, to dry off. As they undress, she tells Forrest that she wants to be famous, a singer like Joan Baez, 'on an empty stage with my guitar and my voice, just me, and I want to reach people on a personal level'. She also asks Forrest if he has ever been with a girl, and takes off her bra, placing his hand on her breast. He seems to ejaculate at this point (it later becomes apparent that this is one of only two sexual experiences in Forrest's entire life). Jenny seems somewhat disappointed but understanding.

As a result of making it onto the All-American football team, Forrest is invited to meet President Kennedy at the White House, the first of three eventual meetings with different US Presidents. At this point, Forrest mentions the assassinations of both John and Robert Kennedy. Forrest graduates from college and is almost immediately approached by a US Army recruiter, who thrusts into his hands a leaflet with the slogan 'Excellent careers for excellent young men'. On the bus, it is much the same story as on the school bus on his first day, but he sits next to a black man who also appears to be slow, and this man, Bubba, becomes his best friend in the army. Bubba tells Forrest that he has been drafted, and begins to tell him all about the shrimping business, which Bubba says he will pursue once discharged. We see a series of historical flashbacks to Bubba's female ancestors, all of whom have cooked shrimp for white folks in the South.

In the army, the drill sergeant tells Forrest that Forrest must be a genius, with an IQ of 160, because Forrest is uncomplaining and well suited to following simple orders. He breaks the company record for the speed with which he can strip, clean and

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[3] Forrest does not tell the audience where Jenny went to college; the letterman's sweater she is wearing in the Playboy spread is white with a red "M".

reassemble his M-16. One night, someone passes him a copy of *Playboy*, which has images of Jenny, wearing only her college sweater, in a feature entitled 'The Girls of the South', which results in her expulsion from college. Thereafter, Forrest goes to visit her perform in a show in Memphis, Tennessee, which Forrest thinks is a good thing, because she has achieved her dream, but which the audience knows to be a strip club, where she performs naked folk songs under the name 'Bobbi Dylan'. She plays 'Blowin' in the Wind' but when one of the customers tries to put money in her shoe, she kicks him away and he retaliates by throwing his drink over her, which prompts Forrest to rescue her again. Jenny is angry, and tells him that he can't keep trying to rescue her all the time. When he says that he loves her, she tells him that he does not know what love is. She asks Forrest if he remembers the time they prayed for her to be turned into a bird, and asks him whether she could fly off the bridge on which they are standing. We assume she has lost (or quit) her job, since she hitches a ride in order to leave town. Before she goes, Forrest has some important news: 'They sendin' me; to Vietnam. It's this whole other country'. Jenny reiterates her old advice, that if Forrest should get into trouble, he should run away.

The Vietnam sequence begins 38 minutes into the film and opens with a silhouette of a helicopter flying over rice paddies and the noise of the helicopter blades. All of the music in this section of the film is evocative of the era, including songs by Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix, The Mamas and the Papas, Aretha Franklin, 'Respect', Creedence Clearwater Revival, 'Fortunate Son', and Buffalo Springfield's 'For What it's Worth'. The helicopter lands and Forrest and Bubba disembark. They are confronted with a scene which contains all of the visual signifiers that have, over time (and primarily through films) come to be associated with – to 'mean' – Vietnam in Vietnam War films: crates of beer and soft drinks, barbecuing in oil drums, soldiers playing cards, palm trees, fatigues and dog tags, formations of helicopters flying across the Mekong river delta... and their new commanding officer, Lieutenant Dan Taylor, calls them FNGs. He gives them basic advice, including that socks are the most important piece of equipment, and that they must change these whenever the platoon stops while out on patrol. Forrest tells us that Lt Dan 'was from a long great military tradition: somebody in his family had fought and died in every single American war'. As with Bubba's female maternal ancestors, we see a series of Lt Dan's male paternal

ancestors, dying in the War of Independence, the Civil War, World War I and World War II.

During Forrest's time in Vietnam, the Vietnamese are never shown, and Forrest does not seem to understand who the US is there to fight, articulating the objective of the conflict only as 'we were always looking for this guy named Charlie'. He offers a limited analysis of this era: 'I don't know much about anything, but I think some of America's best young men served in this war'. Forrest goes on patrol with his platoon, during which we experience the rainy season with him. Bubba tells him they are like brothers, watching out for one another, and asks Forrest to go into the shrimping business with him, 50:50, when they return from 'Nam. We see Forrest writing to Jenny, then the camera cuts to Jenny, dressed as a hippy with long blonde hair and her guitar, leaving her grandmother's trailer in Alabama in a Volkswagen Combi van.

While Forrest and his platoon are out on patrol, the rainy season comes to an abrupt end and the platoon is attacked almost immediately. The most graphic violence of the film comes shortly after this combat sequence begins, with two of Forrest's platoon being incinerated in the ditch next to him. The platoon is ordered to fall back, and Forrest runs as far away as possible. Once he realises that Bubba is not with him, he runs back to find him, but keeps finding other members of his platoon, so he picks them up and takes them to safety on the banks of the river. He rescues four members of the platoon, including Lt Dan, in this way, although Lt Dan did not want to be rescued and is angry with Forrest. When Forrest finally finds Bubba, we briefly see what may be the Vietnamese enemy, as shadowy figures run past in the background of the shot. As Forrest runs with Bubba, three US bomber planes drop napalm on their position, with Forrest only just able to outrun the explosions. When Bubba asks Forrest 'why'd this happen?', Forrest in only able to reply 'you got shot'. (We later see Bubba's gravestone, which records his date of death as June 7 1967.)

At the end of this section of narration, just after Bubba has died, we are once again returned to the bus stop and park bench, where a completely different member of the public now comprises Forrest's audience. Forrest finishes telling this part of his

life story with the phrase 'That's all I have to say about that'. It transpires that Forrest received a 'million dollar wound', having been shot in the buttocks, which enabled him to leave the theatre of combat without having lost a major limb – unlike Lt Dan, who has had both legs amputated above the knees and who is in the bed next to Forrest. It is while he is in the hospital that Forrest discovers that all of his letters to Jenny have been returned to sender, and also that one of the veterans teaches him to play table tennis. He practises all the time, and rapidly becomes an excellent player. Lt Dan is deeply angry and unhappy with Forrest robbing him of what he claims was his destiny. In the middle of the night, he pulls Forrest out of bed and asks Forrest bitterly if he knows what it's like not to have the use of his legs, of which, of course, Forrest does have personal experience. Dan claims that he has been cheated, because he was supposed to die in the field with honour, instead of becoming a sorry cripple. He collapses through emotional exhaustion with his head on Forrest's chest. Later that day, Forrest discovers he has been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, the US armed services' highest honour.

At the ceremony at the White House, Forrest inadvertently moons President Johnson, who had jokingly expressed an interest in seeing Gump's wound.[4] Thereafter, Forrest goes sight-seeing in Washington, DC, with an Instamatic camera, when he is corralled into participating in a Vietnam veterans' anti-war rally by a 'loud and pushy' female activist, who is dressed in combat fatigues and a military helmet. The other veterans have long hair and old uniforms, but Forrest is still in his dress uniform, along with his medal. Perhaps because he is dressed smartly, Forrest is pushed to the front of the line. Already on the podium is someone 'wearing an

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[4] The US army objected to this scene in particular, and to the portrayal of an idiot succeeding in the military in general: '"The 'mooning' of a President by a uniformed soldier is not acceptable academic licence"' (US Army quoted in Robb 2004: 79). Key features (in terms of the analytical purpose of this chapter) of the original screenplay were amended/removed to reflect the concerns of the Pentagon about the portrayal of the military. In earlier versions, Forrest is enlisted into a unit entirely comprised of '"[men] slower than molasses... dumbos and half-wits"' (Forrest, quoted in Robb 2004: 78). This comment is an apparent reference to Robert McNamara's 1966 '100,000 Project', which set out to recruit one hundred thousand men who had previously failed army intelligence tests into the military (Robb 2004: 78). The Pentagon also objected to a scene 'in which Lt. Dan is seen crying after being ordered to send his men on a dangerous mission' (79). Despite the fact that the makers of Forrest Gump ultimately received no assistance from the Pentagon, because they were not prepared to make all of the required changes, these amendments remained in the final version of the screenplay.

American flag for a shirt, and he liked to say the F word, *a lot*: F this and F that. And every time he said the F word, people? Well, for some reason they'd cheer'. This character appears to be based on Abbie Hoffman, the famous anti-war and civil rights activist.

Forrest is eventually brought on stage to speak to the crowd, and Hoffman asks Forrest to 'tell us a little bit about the war, man'. 'The war in Vietnam?' clarifies Forrest. 'The war in Viet fuckin' Nam,' yells Hoffman, to rapturous cheers and applause. In voiceover, Forrest tells us that 'There was only one thing I could say about the war in Vietnam'. We then see his flashback persona say the exact same thing. However, before we can hear any of Forrest's opinions on this matter, a man in military uniform sabotages the rally by literally pulling the plug, removing all of the audio cables from the machinery at the back of the podium. Forrest's microphones cut out, with some feedback, and we are unable to hear any of what he says for the next thirty seconds. The activists stop him and attempt to get sound back up and running, but we come back to his speech as he is wrapping up, once more solemnly intoning, 'that's all I have to say about that'. Forrest's comments are clearly eloquent and emotional, since they have moved Hoffman to tears. Hoffman asks Forrest his name, and tells the crowd, at which point a far-off figure cries 'Forrest', and we see Jenny running through the water to get to him. Forrest runs to join her, and they have an emotional Hollywood-film reunion in the middle of the Mall. Forrest describes this reunion as 'the happiest moment of my life'.

Jenny takes him to a Black Panther house. The pictures on the walls include Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, and Ho Chi Minh, and one of the slogans invokes Mohammed Ali's famous comment: '[The] Vietcong never called us nigger'. The black men treat Forrest with disrespect, and when Jenny tries to explain that Forrest is 'one of us', the black man launches into a tirade: 'Our purpose here is to protect our black leaders from the racial onslaught of the pig, who wishes to brutalise our black leaders, rape our women and destroy our black communities!' Jenny is in an argument with a man in a military jacket, Wesley, who, it transpires, is leader of the Berkeley chapter of SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) and her boyfriend, and

who asks (about Forrest) 'who's the baby killer?' When the Black Panther returns from his phone call, he immediately continues with his rant:

> Let me tell you something else: we are here to offer protection and help for all those who need our help, because we, the Black Panthers, are against the war in Vietnam, yes, we are against any war where black soldiers are sent to the front line to die for a country that hates them, yes, we are against any war where black soldiers go to fight and come to be brutalised and killed in their own communities as they sleep in their beds at night, yes we are against all these racist and imperial dog acts.

During this time, Forrest has paid no attention to the black man, but has followed the argument between Jenny and Wesley. At this point, Wesley slaps Jenny with enough force to knock her down, while everybody just stands around and watches. Forrest crosses the room and starts punching Wesley repeatedly. 'He should not be hitting you, Jenny'. Instead of doing anything, the Black Panthers merely require them to leave. Forrest apologises before departing. As they walk through Washington, Forrest tells Jenny he would never hurt her, and that he wanted to be her boyfriend. As Forrest recounts to us Jenny's adventures, we see them on the screen in flashback: hitch-hiking in the rain on Route 66, taking acid around a campfire, and busking next to Jean Harlow's star on Hollywood Boulevard in LA, before going to San Francisco. (After this point, we will see visual flashbacks of what is happening to Jenny whenever Forrest thinks about her.) They walk and talk all night and, next morning when it is time to leave, we see a rare moment of Forrest's anger, when Wesley comes to apologise to Jenny. His apology is really more of an excuse: 'Things got a little out of hand. It's just this war and that, *that lying sonofabitch Johnson*! I would never hurt you; you know that'. Forrest makes his feelings known (that she should return to Greenbow) but Jenny tells Forrest that they live very different lives. Forrest gives Jenny his medal before she leaves with Wesley on the bus.

The next shot dates the scene quite precisely to 20 July 1969: during the moon landing, everybody is fixated not on the television pictures but on Forrest, who is playing ping pong against himself with two balls. He is so good at table tennis that he

is sent to play against the Chinese. Upon his return he appears on the Dick Cavett Show with John Lennon, where he inadvertently gives Lennon the idea for the lyrics to 'Imagine'. He notes the assassination of Lennon: 'Some years later that nice young man from England was on his way home to see his little boy and was signing some autographs; for no particular reason at all somebody shot him.' As he leaves the New York television studio, he is met by Lt Dan, now an alcoholic, long-haired and in a wheelchair. It is clear that none of the taxi drivers respect t him as a paraplegic veteran. He goes with Lt Dan to Dan's dingy hotel room, where they watch the USO Christmas show with Bob Hope. Lt Dan complains about all of the people at the Veterans' Centre who want him to find God. Gump also spends New Year with Dan (although it is not clear precisely *which* New Year), telling Dan about the shrimping business plan and his promise to Bubba. Dan makes a similar promise to Forrest: 'they day that you are a shrimp boat captain, I will come and be your first mate'.

They meet up with two females (prostitutes?) who know Dan already. Forrest's mind wanders to Jenny, and while he talks, we see what is actually happening to her (although he is unaware of these images). She is packing up her belongings (a man – not Wesley – lies drunk or stoned on the bed) and leaving the apartment. The four head back to Dan's room, where one of the girls climbs onto Forrest's lap and tries to kiss him; he reacts by attempting to stand up and she falls on the floor. She asks him sarcastically if he lost his pecker during the war, or if he is stupid, which makes Dan angry, and he throws them both out. As he falls out of his wheelchair, they call him a loser and a freak. Forrest explains why he did not want to kiss the woman: 'she tasted like cigarettes'. Forrest realises that Dan 'didn't want to be called crippled just like I didn't want to be called stupid'. Forrest is called to the White House again, to celebrate his sporting success in China. When Nixon learns of the hotel in which Forrest is staying, he promises to find him more salubrious accommodation, and Forrest moves into a suite in the Watergate Hotel. That night, he rings up the front desk to complain about the flashlights in one of the rooms visible from his window.

In the very next shot, we see archival footage of Nixon's resignation speech. At the same time, Forrest is discharged from the US Army, so he goes home to Alabama, first to see his mother and then to Bayou La Batre on the coast, in order to see

Bubba's grave and Bubba's family and keep his promise to Bubba by setting up the shrimping business. Bubba's mother thinks Forrest is crazy or stupid and, although he buys a boat, he has no success with his shrimp nets, catching nothing but rubbish. He names his boat Jenny, and the film cuts to a shot of her snorting coke in a club, and subsequently in a hotel room with a man who has just injected heroine. She looks deathly pale, and goes out onto the balcony, where she climbs onto the ledge and seems to be making up her mind whether to jump. When she nearly slips and falls, she climbs back down and sits in a chair, rocking back and forth like a mentally ill person while the wind rages around her and the guitar solo to 'Free Bird' plays wildly.

Forrest, in contrast is on a calm sea with the sun at his back, when he espies Lt Dan on the boardwalk. Dan has received a letter from Forrest and has come to Bayou La Batre to fulfil his promise to Forrest. They are still having no luck, so Forrest joins the local gospel church and choir to pray for shrimp. Dan asks derisively 'Where the hell's this God of yours', at which point 'God showed up' in the form of a storm. Forrest admits to being scared, but Dan seems to enjoy himself, railing against God. The storm turns out to be Hurricane Carmen, which destroys Bayou La Batre's entire shrimping industry – except Forrest's boat, because they were out on the water during the storm. Now that Forrest's is the only seaworthy boat, they find it very easy to catch shrimp and the Bubba-Gump Shrimp Company is founded.

Returning to the park bench, the old man listening to Forrest's story finds this latest tale too much to swallow, and departs, believing that Forrest is telling whoppers. However, Forrest shows a copy of *Fortune* magazine, with him and Dan on the cover, to the remaining audience (a little old lady), thus demonstrating the truth of his story. Lt Dan thanks Forrest for saving his life, and Forrest opines that Dan has finally made his peace with God. President Ford's second attempted assassination is shown on television as Forrest and Dan eat dinner, immediately after which Forrest discovers that his mother is sick. He returns to Greenbow, where he learns that she is dying of cancer. After her death, he does not return to Bayou La Batre but stays in Greenbow, and is given 'a fine job' by the city fathers of Greenbow, mowing the school field. Dan invests the money from the shrimping business in Apple Computers and, because Forrest now has so much money, he donates part of his fortune to the

Foursquare Baptist Church, where he used to worship, for a new church building, and part to the Bayou La Batre fishing hospital, for a new 'Forrest Gump Medical Center'. He also gives Bubba's mother the 50 percent share that would rightly have gone to Bubba had he lived, and he cuts the grass for free, because he doesn't need the money.

One day, when he is cutting the grass by his house, Jenny comes home. She stays at Forrest's house, sleeping a lot, and walking. When they come across her old house one day, dilapidated and run down, Jenny throws her shoes at it, and then some rocks, muttering 'how could you do that?!', presumably a reference to her father. She sits and cries and Forrest sits with her. As a present, Jenny gives Forrest a new pair of Nike trainers, for running. They sit on the log at the lake watching the bicentennial fireworks on 4 July 1976, and Forrest declares that 'it was the happiest time of my life'. That evening, Forrest asks Jenny to marry him. Although Jenny agrees that Forrest would make a good husband, she turns him down, saying 'you don't wanna marry me'. Forrest asks Jenny why she doesn't love him and he tells her that he does know what love is. That night, Jenny comes to Forrest's room in a long white nightgown and climbs into his bed. She climbs on top of him and tells him that she does love him. This is their second and final sexual encounter.

Next morning, she leaves in a taxi before Forrest is awake, leaving behind his medal. For a while, Forrest sits in his empty house, wearing his Nike sneakers, but he starts running, 'for no particular reason'. As he runs past the barber shop in Greenbow, we overhear a TV news report about President Carter's collapse from heat exhaustion during a road race in Maryland. Forrest runs between the Pacific and Atlantic shorelines at least four times, for a total of 3 years, 2 months, 14 days and 16 hours. He runs through cornfields and over mountains, by pastures and through the desert, with long hair and a flowing beard. (Jenny is waiting tables in a café during this time.) A number of reporters ask Forrest 'Why are you running?' 'Are you doing this for world peace?' 'Are you running for the homeless?' 'Are you running for women's rights?' 'Or for the environment?' 'Or for animals?' 'They just couldn't believe that somebody would do all that running for no particular reason. ... I jus felt like running.' People join him on his run, and he helps a man in the bumper sticker business (shit

happens) and a man in the t-shirt business (the smiley face). Forrest then contradicts his earlier statement that he was running for no particular reason, saying 'My Momma always said you got to put the past behind you before you can move on and I think that's what my running was all about'.

Forrest's run ends abruptly on or around September 19, 1979. The next shot of Forrest is of him eating lunch, just as the TV is showing footage of President Reagan's attempted assassination, which dates this shot to 30 March, 1981. He receives a letter from Jenny telling him to visit her in Savannah and, at this point, the flashback narration catches up with itself. Forrest says he is waiting for a bus, but the old lady on the bench gives him instructions, and he runs to Jenny's instead. Jenny opens the door, with a stylish new haircut and what looks like a nurse's uniform on. She is pleased to see him, and shows him a scrapbook she kept while he was running. She tells him 'I want to apologise for anything that I ever did to you 'cause I was messed up for a long time...' She is interrupted by the childminder (or friend) bringing her son home. She tells him she named her son Forrest after his daddy. Forrest does not immediately work it out, so Jenny tells him. She reassures him 'There's nothing you need to do, OK, you didn't do anything wrong' and confirms that their son is very smart. (If Forrest Junior was conceived on July 4, 1976, he must have been born in the spring of 1977 and must be about four years old at this point).

Later, in the park, Jenny tells Forrest that she has 'some kind of virus and the doctors don't, they don't know what it is and there isn't anything they can do about it'. With our 1990s knowledge, the audience is able to infer that Jenny has AIDS, although this is never confirmed. Forrest invites Jenny and Forrest to come and live in his house in Greenbow, and in the next scene we see Forrest and Jenny preparing to get married. Lt Dan shows up, with short hair, new prosthetic legs and a new young Asian fiancée, Susan. The prosthetics are a custom-made titanium alloy – the same material used on the space shuttle.

After the wedding, we see a happy family scene of the three of them walking up Oak Alley, but after this, Jenny appears in bed (in Forrest's mother's old room) with Forrest bringing her a tray of food. She asks him if he was scared in Vietnam. He says

'Yes... well, I don't know'. He tells her how beautiful it could be, along with the bayou, and all the scenes he saw while he was running, and she wistfully comments that she wishes she could have been there with him; Forrest tells her she was. She tells him she loves him, and the film cuts to a shot of her grave. Forrest has her buried under 'their' tree and has the old house she grew up in bulldozed to the ground. Her gravestone tells us that she died on March 22, 1982. As he talks to her at the grave, Forrest wonders aloud, 'I don't know if we each have a, a destiny or if we're all just floating around accidental-like on a breeze but I, I think maybe it's *both*, maybe both is happening at the same time'. Not long afterwards, Forrest sits with his sun at the end of Oak Alley, waiting for the bus to take Forrest Junior to school (if it is Forrest Junior's first year at school, this dates the scene to sometime in Autumn, 1983). Forrest Junior is taking *Curious George* to school for 'show and tell'; the feather that Forrest placed between the covers at the beginning of the film falls out and lands at his feet. Forrest Junior has his own, similar, encounter with the woman who drives the school bus and the feather blows away.

Filmography

84 Charlie MoPic, 1989, directed by Patrick Sheane Duncan.

Ali, 2001, directed by Michael Mann.

Aliens, 1986, directed by James Cameron.

Apocalypse Now, 1979, directed by Francis Ford Coppola.

Birth of a Nation, 1915, directed by W. D. Griffiths.

Black Hawk Down, 2001, directed by Ridley Scott.

Born on the Fourth of July, 1989, directed by Oliver Stone.

The Boys in Company C, 1978, directed by Sidney J. Furie.

Brothers, 2009, directed by Jim Sheridan.

Casualties of War, 1989, directed by Brian de Palma.

Chaplin, 1992, directed by Richard Attenborough.

Coming Home, 1978, directed by Hal Ashby.

The Deer Hunter, 1978, directed by Michael Cimino.

Fight Club, 1999, directed by David Fincher.

First Blood, 1982, directed by Ted Kotcheff.

Forrest Gump, 1994, directed by Robert Zemeckis.

Full Metal Jacket, 1987, directed by Stanley Kubrick.

Good Guys Wear Black, 1978, directed by Ted Post.

Good Morning, Vietnam, 1987, directed by Barry Levinson.

Go Tell the Spartans, 1978, directed by Ted Post.

The Green Berets, 1968, directed by John Wayne.

Green Zone, 2010, directed by Paul Greengrass.

Hamburger Hill, 1987, directed by James Carabatsos.

Heaven and Earth, 1993, directed by Oliver Stone.

Hot Shots! Part Deux, 1993, directed by Jim Abrahams.

The Hurt Locker, 2008, directed by Kathryn Bigelow.

In Country, 1989, directed by Norman Jewison.

In the Valley of Elah, 2007, directed by Paul Haggis.

Jacob's Ladder, 1990, directed by Adrian Lyne.

The Karate Kid, 1984, directed by John G. Avildsen.

Kill Bill, Volume I, 2003, directed by Quentin Tarantino.

Kill Bill, Volume II, 2004, directed by Quentin Tarantino.

Lions for Lambs, 2007, directed by Robert Redford.

The Machinist, 2004, directed by Brad Anderson.

The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance, 1962, directed by John Ford.

*M*A*S*H**, 1970, directed by Robert Altman.

The Matrix Reloaded, 2003, directed by Andy Wachowski and Lana Wachowski.

Memento, 2000, directed by Christopher Nolan.

Missing In Action, 1984, directed by Joseph Zito.

Missing In Action 2: The Beginning, 1985, directed by Lance Hool.

Night of the Living Dead, 1968, directed by George Romero.

Platoon, 1986, directed by Oliver Stone.

Pearl Harbor, 2002, directed by Michael Bay.

Pulp Fiction, 1994, directed by Quentin Tarantino.

Rambo, 2008, directed by Sylvester Stallone.

Rambo: First Blood, Part II, 1985, directed by George P. Cosmatos.

Rambo III, 1988, directed by Peter MacDonald.

Rio Grande, 1950, directed by John Ford.

Rocky, 1976, directed by John G. Avildsen.

Rules of Engagement, 2000, directed by William Friedkin.

Scream, 1996, directed by Wes Craven.

Scream 2, 1997, directed by Wes Craven.

The Searchers, 1956, directed by John Ford.

Spartacus, 1961, directed by Stanley Kubrick.

Stagecoach, 1939, directed by John Ford.

Star Wars, Episode IV: A New Hope, 1977, directed by George Lucas.

Tigerland, 2000, directed by Joel Schumacher.

Tropic Thunder, 2008, directed by Ben Stiller.

Uncommon Valor, 1983, directed by Ted Kotcheff.

We Were Soldiers, 2002, directed by Randall Wallace.

Who'll Stop the Rain (a.k.a. *Dog Soldiers*), 1978, directed by Karel Reisz.

Television Shows

Buffy the Vampire Slayer, 1997-2003.
Production companies: Mutant Enemy, Kuzui Enterprises, Sandollar Television, 20th Century Fox Television.
US distributors: Twentieth Century Fox Film Distribution, The WB Television Network, United Paramount Network.

Star Trek, 1966-1969.
Production companies: Desilu Productions, Norway Corporation, Paramount Television.
US distributors: National Broadcasting Company (NBC).

Star Trek: The Next Generation, 1987-1994.
Production company: Paramount Television.
US distributors: Paramount Pictures, CBS Paramount Domestic Television.

The West Wing, 1999-2006.
Production companies: John Wells Productions, Warner Bros. Television.
US distributors: Warner Bros. Television, National Broadcasting Company (NBC).

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